THE

PRAIRIE,

A TALE,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THE SPY, THE PILOT,

&c. &c.

"Mark his condition, and the event; then tell me,
If this might be a brother."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE PRAIRIE.

CHAPTER I.

Pray God the Duke of York excuse himself!

King Henry VI.

THE mustering of the borderers on the following morning was silent, sullen, and gloomy. The repast of that hour was wanting in the inharmonious accompaniment with which Esther ordinarily enlivened their meals; for the effects of the powerful opiate the Doctor had administered, still muddled her usually quick intellects. The young men brooded over the absence of their elder brother,

and the brows of Ishmael himself were sternly knit, as he cast his scowling eyes from one to the other, like a man who was preparing to meet and to repel an expected assault on his authority. In the midst of this family distrust, Ellen and her midnight confederate, the naturalist, took their usual places among the children, without awakening suspicion or exciting comment. The only apparent fruits of the adventure in which they had been engaged, were occasional upliftings of the eyes, on the part of the Doctor, which were mistaken by the observers for some of his scientific contemplations of the heavens, but which, in reality, were no other than furtive glances at the fluttering walls of the proscribed tent.

At length the squatter, who had waited in vain for some more decided manifestation of the expected rising among his sons, resolved to make a demonstration of his own intentions.

"Asa shall account to me for this undutiful conduct!" he coolly observed. "Here has the live-long night gone by, and he out-lying on the prairie, when his hand and his rifle might both have been wanted in a brush with the Siouxes, for any right he had to know the contrary."

"Spare your breath, good man," retorted his wife, "be saving of your breath; for you may have to call long enough for the boy before he will answer!"

"It ar' a fact that some men be so womanish, as to let the young master the old! But you, old Eester, should know better than to think such will ever be the nature of things in the family of Ishmael Bush."

"Ah! you are a hectorer with the boys, when need calls! I know it well, Ishmael; and one of your sons have you driven from you, by your temper; and

that, too, at a time when he is most wanted."

"Father," said Abner, whose sluggish nature had gradually been stimulating itself to the exertion of taking so bold a stand, "the boys and I have pretty generally concluded to go out on the search of Asa. We are disagreeable about his 'camping on the prairie, instead of coming in to his own bed, as we all know he would like to do—"

"Pshaw!" muttered Abiram; "the boy has killed a buck; or perhaps a buffalo; and he is sleeping by the carcass to keep off the wolves, till day; we shall soon see him, or hear him bawling for help to bring in his load."

"'Tis little help that a son of mine will call for, to shoulder a buck or to quarter your wild-beef!" returned the mother. "And you, Abiram, to say such an uncertain thing! you, who said yourself that the red skins had been prowling

around this place no later than the yesterday—"

"I!" exclaimed her brother, hastily, as if anxious to retract an error; "I said it then, and I say it now; and so you will find it to be. The Tetons are in our neighbourhood, and happy will it prove for the boy if he is well shut of them."

"It seems to me," said Dr. Battius, speaking with the sort of deliberation and dignity one is apt to use after having thoroughly ripened his opinions by sufficient reflection, "it seems to me, a man but little skilled in the signs and tokens of Indian warfare, especially as practised in these remote plains, but one, who I may say without vanity has some insight into the mysteries of nature—it seems, then to me, thus humbly qualified, that when doubts exist in a matter of such moment, it would always be the wisest course to appease them."

"No more of your doctoring for me!" cried the grum Esther; "no more of

your quiddities in a healthy family, say I! Here was I doing well, only a little out of sorts with over instructing the young, and you dos'd me with a drug, that still hangs about my tongue, like a pound weight on a humming-bird's wing!"

"Is the medicine out?" drily demanded Ishmael: "it must be a rare doser that, if it gives a heavy feel to the tongue of old Esther!"

"Friend," continued the Doctor, waving his hand, for the angry wife to maintain the peace, "that it cannot perform all that is said of it, the very charge of good Mrs. Bush is a sufficient proof. But to speak of the absent Asa. There is doubt as to his fate, and there is a proposition to solve it. Now, in the natural sciences, truth is always a desideratum; and I confess it would seem to be equally so in the present case, which may be called a vacuum where, according to the laws

of physic, there should exist some pretty palpable proofs of materiality."

"Don't mind him, don't mind him," cried Esther, observing that the rest of his auditors listened with an attention, which might proceed equally from acquiescence in his proposal or ignorance of its meaning.

"There is a drug in every word he utters."

"Dr. Battius wishes to say," Ellen modestly interposed, "that as some of us think Asa is in danger, and some think otherwise, the whole family might pass an hour or two in looking for him."

"Does he?" interrupted the woman, "then Dr. Battius has more sense in him than I believed! She is right, Ishmael; and what she says shall be done. I will shoulder a rifle myself; and woe betide the red-skin that crosses my path! I have pulled a trigger before to-day; ay, and heard an Indian yell, too, to my sorrow."

The spirit of Esther diffused itself, like the stimulus which attends a victorious war-cry, among her indolent sons. They arose in a body, and declared their determination to second so bold a resolution. Ishmael prudently yielded to an impulse he could not resist, and in a few minutes the woman appeared, shouldering her arms, prepared to lead forth in person, such of her descendants as chose to follow in her train.

"Let them stay with the children that please," she said; "and them follow me, who ar' not chicken-hearted?"

"Abiram, it will not do to leave the huts without some guard," Ishmael whispered, glancing his eye upward.

The man whom he addressed, started, and betrayed extraordinary eagerness in his reply.

"I will tarry and watch the camp."

A dozen voices were instantly raised in objection to this proposal. He was wanted to point out the places where

the hostile tracks had been seen, and his termagant sister openly scouted at the idea, as unworthy of his manhood. The reluctant Abiram was compelled to yield, and Ishmael made a new disposition for the defence of the place; which was admitted, by every one, to be all-important to their security and comfort.

He offered the post of commandant to Dr. Battius, who, however, peremptorily and somewhat haughtily, declined the doubtful honour; exchanging looks of singular intelligence with Ellen, as he did so. In this dilemma the squatter was obliged to constitute the girl herself castellain; taking care, however, in deputing this important trust, to omit no words of caution and instruction. When this preliminary point was settled, the young men proceeded to arrange certain means of defence, and signals of alarm, that were adapted to the weakness and character of the garrison.

Several masses of rock were drawn to the edge of the upper level, and so placed as to leave it at the discretion of the feeble Ellen and her associates, to cast them or not, as they might choose, on the heads of any invaders, who would, of necessity, be obliged to mount the eminence by the difficult and narrow passage already so often mentioned. In addition to this formidable obstruction, the barriers were strengthened and rendered nearly impassable. Smaller missiles, that might be hurled even by the hands of the younger children, but which would prove, from the elevation of the place, exceedingly dangerous, were provided in profusion. A pile of dried leaves and splinters were placed, as a beacon, on the upper rock, and then, even in the jealous judgment of the squatter, the post was deemed competent to maintain a creditable siege.

The moment the rock was thought to be in a state of sufficient security, the party

who composed what might be called the sortie, sallied forth on their anxious expedition. The advance was led by Esther in person, who, attired in a dress half masculine, and bearing a weapon like the rest, seemed no unfit leader for the groupe of wildly clad frontier-men, that followed leisurely in her rear.

"Now, Abiram!" cried the amazon, in a voice that was cracked and harsh, for the simple reason of being used too often on a strained and unnatural key. "Now, Abiram, run with your nose low; show yourself a hound of the true breed, and do some credit to your training. You it was that saw the prints of the Indian moccasin, and it behoves you, to let others be as wise as yourself. Come; come to the front, man; and give us a bold lead."

The brother, who appeared at all times to stand in salutary awe of his sister's authority, complied; though it

was with a reluctance so evident, as to excite sneers, even among the unobservant and indolent sons of the squatter. Ishmael, himself, moved among his tall children, like one who expected nothing from the search, and who was indifferent alike to its success or failure. In this manner the party proceeded until their distant fortress had sunk so low, as to present an object no larger nor more distinct than a hazy point, on the margin of the prairie. Hitherto their progress had been silent and somewhat rapid, for as swell after swell was mounted and passed, without varying, or discovering a living object to enliven the monotony of the view, even the tongue of Esther was hushed in increasing anxiety. Here, however, Ishmael chose to pause, and casting the butt of his rifle from his shoulder to the ground, he observed —

"This is enough. Buffalo signs, and

deer signs, ar' plenty; but where ar' the Indian footsteps that you have seen, Abiram?"

"Still farther to the west," returned the other, pointing in the direction he named. "This was the spot, where I struck the tracks of the buck I killed: it was after I took the deer, that I fell upon the Teton trail."

"And a bloody piece of work you made of it, man," cried the squatter, pointing tauntingly to the soiled garments of his kinsman, and then directing the attention of the spectators to his own, by the way of a triumphant contrast. Here have I cut the throats of two lively does, and a scampering fawn, without spot or stain; while you, blundering dog as you ar', you have made as much work for Eester and her girls, as though butchering was your regular calling. Come, boys; I say it is enough. I am too old not to know the signs of the frontiers, and

no Indian has been here, since the last fall of water. Follow me, and I will make a turn that shall give us at least the beef of a fallow cow for our trouble."

"Follow *me!*" echoed Esther, stepping undauntedly forward. "I am leader to-day, and I *will* be followed. For who so proper, let me know, as a mother, to head a search for her lost child?"

Ishmael regarded his untractable mate with a smile of indulgent pity. Observing that she had already struck out a path for herself, different both from that of Abiram and the one he had seen fit to choose, and being unwilling to draw the cord of authority too tight, just at that moment, he again sullenly submitted to her will. But Dr. Battius, who had hitherto been a silent and thoughtful attendant on the woman, now saw fit to raise his feeble voice in the way of remonstrance.

"I agree with thy partner in life,

worthy and gentle Mrs. Bush," he said, "in believing that some ignis fatuus of the imagination has deceived Abiram, in the signs or symptoms of which he has spoken."

"Symptoms, yourself!" interrupted the termagant. "This is no time for bookish words, nor is this a place to stop and swallow medicines. If you are a-leg-weary, say so, as a plain speaking man should; then seat yourself on the prairie, like a hound that is foot-sore, and take your natural rest."

"I accord in the opinion," the naturalist calmly replied, complying, literally, with the suggestion of the deriding Esther, and taking his seat very coolly, by the side of an indigenous shrub; the examination of which he commenced, on the instant, in order that science might not lose any of its just and important dues. I honour your excellent advice, Mistress Esther, as you may perceive. Go thou in quest of thy offspring; while

I tarry here, in pursuit of that which is better, viz. an insight into the arcana of nature's volume."

The woman answered with a hollow, unnatural, and scornful laugh, and even her heavy sons, as they slowly passed the seat of the already abstracted naturalist, did not disdain to manifest their contempt in significant smiles. In a few minutes the train had mounted the nearest eminence, and, as it turned the rounded acclivity, the Doctor was left to pursue his profitable investigations in entire solitude.

Another half-hour passed, during which Esther continued to advance, on her seemingly fruitless search. Her pauses, however, were becoming frequent, and her looks wandering and uncertain, when footsteps were heard clattering through the bottom, and at the next instant a buck was seen to bound up the ascent, and to dart from before their eyes, in the direction of the

naturalist. So sudden and unlooked-for had been the passage of the animal, and so much had he been favoured by the shape of the ground, that before any one of the foresters had time to bring his rifle to his shoulder, it was already far beyond the range of a bullet.

"Look out for the wolf!" shouted Abner, shaking his head in vexation, at being a single moment too late. "A wolf's skin will be no bad gift in a winter's night; ay, yonder the hungry devil comes!"

"Hold!" cried Ishmael, knocking up the levelled weapon of his too eager son. "'Tis not a wolf; but a hound of thorough blood and bottom. Ha! we have hunters nigh: there ar' two of them!"

He was still speaking when the animals in question came leaping on the track of the deer, striving with noble ardour to outdo each other. One was an aged dog, whose strength seemed to

be sustained purely by his generous emulation, and the other a pup, that gambolled even while he pressed most warmly on the chace. They both ran, however, with clean and powerful leaps, carrying their noses high, like animals of the most keen and subtle scent. They had passed; and in another minute they would have been running open-mouthed with the deer in view, had not the younger dog suddenly bounded from the course and uttered a cry of surprise. His aged companion stopped also, and returned panting and exhausted to the place, where the other was whirling around in swift, and apparently in mad evolutions, circling the spot in his own footsteps, and continuing his outcry, in a short, snappish barking. But, when the elder hound had reached the spot, he seated himself, and lifting his nose high into the air, he raised a long, loud, and wailing howl.

"It must be a strong scent," said

Abner, who had been, with the rest of the family, an admiring observer of the movements of the dogs, "that can break off two such creatur's so suddenly from their trail."

"Murder them!" cried Abiram. "I'll swear to the old hound; 'tis the dog of the trapper, whom we now know to be our mortal enemy."

Though the brother of Esther gave such hostile advice, he appeared in no way ready to put it in execution himself. The surprise, which had taken possession of the whole party, exhibited itself in his own vacant, wondering stare, as strongly as in any of the admiring visages by whom he was surrounded. His denunciation, therefore, notwithstanding its dire import, was disregarded; and the dogs were left to obey the impulses of their mysterious instinct, without let or hindrance.

It was long before any of the spectators broke the silence; but the squat-

ter, at length, so far recollected his authority, as to take on himself the right to controul the movements of his children.

"Come away, boys; come away, and leave the hounds to sing their tunes for their own amusement," Ishmael said in his coldest manner. "I scorn to take the life of a beast, because its master has pitch'd himself too nigh my clearing. Come away, boys, come away; we have enough of our own work before us, without turning aside to do that of the whole neighbourhood."

"Come *not* away!" cried Esther, in tones that sounded like the admonitions of some Sybil. "I say, come *not* away, my children. There is a meaning and a warning in this; and as I am a woman and a mother, will I know the truth of it all!"

So saying, the awakened wife of the squatter, brandished her weapon, with an air that was not without its wild and

secret influence, and led the way towards the spot where the dogs still remained, filling the air with their long-drawn and piteous complaints. The whole party followed in her steps, some too indolent to oppose, others obedient to her will, and all more or less excited by the uncommon character of the scene.

"Tell me, you Abner—Abiram—Ishmael!" the woman cried, standing over a spot where the earth was trampled and beaten, and plainly sprinkled with blood; "tell me, you who ar' hunters! what sort of animal has here met his death? Speak! Ye ar' men, and used to the signs of the plains, all of ye; is it the blood of wolf or panther?"

"A buffalo—and a noble and powerful creatur' has it been!" returned the squatter, who looked down calmly on the fatal signs which so strangely affected his wife. "Here are the marks of the spot where he struck his hoofs

into the earth, in the death-struggle; and yonder he has plunged and torn the ground with his horns. Ay, a buffalo bull of wonderful strength and courage has he been!"

"And who has slain him?" continued Esther: "man! where, then, are the offals? Wolves! They devour not the hide! Tell me, ye men and hunters, is this the blood of a beast?"

"The creatur' has plunged over the hillock," said Abner, who had proceeded a short distance beyond the rest of the party. "Ah! there you will find it, in yon swale of alders. Look! a thousand carrion birds ar' hovering, this very moment, above the carcass."

"The animal has still life in him," returned the squatter, "or the buzzards would settle upon their prey! By the action of the dogs it must be something ravenous: I reckon it is the white bear from the upper falls. They are said to cling desperately to life!"

"Ay, let us go back," said Abiram; "there may be danger, and there can be no good in attacking a ravenous beast. Remember, Ishmael, 'twill be a risky job, and one of small profit!"

The young men smiled at this new proof of the well-known pusillanimity of their too sensitive uncle. The oldest even proceeded so far as to express his contempt, by bluntly saying—

"It will do to cage with the other animal we carry; then we may go back double-handed into the settlements, and set up for showmen, around the court-houses and gaols of Kentucky."

The dark, threatening frown, which gathered on the brow of his father, admonished the young man to forbear. Exchanging looks that were half rebellious with his brethren, he saw fit to be silent. But instead of observing the caution recommended by Abiram, they proceeded in a body, until they again

came to a halt within a few yards of the matted cover of the thicket.

The scene had now, indeed, become wild and striking enough to have produced a powerful effect on minds better prepared, than those of the unnurtured family of the squatter, or resist the impressions of such an exciting spectacle. The heavens were, as usual at the season, covered with dark, driving clouds, beneath which interminable flocks of aquatic birds were again on the wing, holding their toilsome and heavy way towards the distant waters of the south. The wind had risen, and was once more sweeping over the prairie in gusts, which it was often vain to oppose; and then again the blasts would seem to mount into the upper air, as if to sport with the drifting vapour, whirling and rolling vast masses of the dusky and ragged volumes over each other, in a terrific and yet grand disorder. Above the

little brake, the flocks of birds still held their flight, circling with heavy wings about the spot, struggling at times against the torrent of wind, and then, favoured by their position and height, making bold swoops upon the thicket, away from which, however, they never failed to sail, screaming in terror, as if apprized, either by sight or instinct, that the hour of their voracious dominion had not yet fully arrived.

Ishmael stood for many minutes, with his wife and children clustered together, in an amazement, with which awe was singularly mingled, gazing in death-like stillness on the imposing sight. The voice of Esther at length broke the charm, and reminded the spectators of the necessity of resolving their doubts in some manner more worthy of their manhood, than by a dull and inactive observation.

"Call in the dogs!" she said; "call in the hounds, and put them into the

thicket; there ar' men enough of ye, if ye have not lost the spirit with which I know ye were born, to tame the tempers of all the bears west of the big river. Call in the dogs, I say, you Enoch! Abner! Gabriel! has wonder made ye deaf as well as dumb?"

One of the young men complied; and having succeeded in detaching the hounds from the place, around which, until then, they had not ceased to hover, he led them down to the margin of the thicket.

"Put them in, boy; put them in," continued the woman; "and you, Ishmael and Abiram, if any thing wicked or hurtful comes forth, shew them the use of your rifles, like frontier-men. If ye ar' wanting in spirit, before the eyes of my children will I put ye both to shame!"

The youths, who, until now, had detained the hounds, let slip the thongs of skin by which they had been held, and

urged them to the attack by their voices. But, it would seem that the elder dog was restrained by some extraordinary sensation, or that he was much too experienced to attempt the rash adventure. After proceeding a few yards, to the very verge of the brake, he made a sudden pause, and stood trembling in all his aged limbs, apparently as unable to recede, as to advance. The encouraging calls of the young men were disregarded, or only answered by a low and plaintive whining. For a minute the pup also was similarly affected; but less sage, or more easily excited, he was induced, at length, to leap forward, and, finally, to dash into the cover. An alarmed and startling howl was heard, and, at the next minute, he broke out of the thicket, and commenced circling the spot, in the same wild and unsteady manner as before.

"Have I a man among my children?" demanded the aroused Esther. "Give

me a truer piece than a childish shot-gun, and I will shew ye what the courage of a frontier-woman can do."

"Stay, mother," exclaimed Abner and Enoch; "if you *will* see the creatur', let *us* drive it into view."

This was quite as much as the youths were accustomed to utter, even on more important occasions; but having thus given a pledge of their intentions, they were far from being backward in redeeming it. Preparing their arms with the utmost care, they advanced with steadiness to the brake. Nerves less often tried than those of the young borderers might easily have shrunk before the dangers of so uncertain an undertaking. As they proceeded, the howls of the dogs became more shrill and plaintive. The vultures and buzzards settled so low as to flap the bushes with their heavy wings, and the wind came hoarsely sweeping along the naked prairie, as if the spirits of the air had also

descended to witness the approaching development.

There was a breathless moment, when the blood of the usually undaunted Esther flowed backward to her heart, as she saw her sons push aside the matted branches of the thicket and bury themselves in its labyrinth. A deep and solemn pause succeeded. Then arose two loud and piercing cries, in quick succession, which were followed by a quiet still more awful and appalling.

"Come back, come back, my children!" cried the woman; the feelings of a mother getting the entire ascendancy in her bosom.

But her voice was hushed, and every faculty seemed frozen with horror, as at that instant the bushes once more parted, and the two adventurers re-appeared, pale, and nearly insensible themselves, and laid at her feet the stiff and motionless body of the lost Asa, with the marks

of a violent death but too plainly stamped on every pallid lineament.

The dogs uttered a long and closing howl, and then breaking off together, they disappeared on the forsaken trail of the deer. The flight of birds wheeled upward into the heavens, filling the air with their complaints at having been robbed of a victim which, frightful and disgusting as it was, still bore too much of the impression of humanity to become the prey of their obscene appetites.

CHAPTER II.

A pickaxe, and a spade, a spade,
For,—and a shrouding sheet;
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest as meet.

Song in Hamlet.

"STAND back! stand off, the whole of ye!" said Esther, hoarsely, to the crowd, which pressed too closely on the corpse: "I am his mother, and my right is better than that of ye all! Who has done this? Tell me, Ishmael, Abiram, Abner! Open your mouths and your hearts, and let God's truth, and no other, issue from them. Who has done this bloody deed?"

Her husband made no reply; but stood, leaning on his rifle, looking sadly, but with an unaltered eye, at the

mangled remains of his son. Not so the mother: she threw herself on the earth, and receiving the cold and ghastly head of the dead man into her lap, she sat many minutes, contemplating those muscular features, on which the death-agony was still horridly impressed, in a silence even more expressive than any language of lamentation could possibly have proved.

The voice of the woman was literally frozen in grief. In vain Ishmael attempted a few words of rude consolation; she neither listened nor answered. Her sons gathered about her in a circle, and expressed, after their uncouth manner, their sympathy in her sorrow, as well as their sense of their own loss, but she motioned them away, impatiently, with her hand. At times her fingers played in the matted hair of the dead; and at others, they lightly attempted to smooth the painfully expressive muscles of its ghastly visage, as the hand of the

mother is often seen to linger fondly about the features of her sleeping child. Then, starting from their revolting office, her hands would flutter around her, and seem to seek some fruitless remedy against the violent blow, which had thus suddenly destroyed the child, in whom she had not only placed her greatest hopes, but so much of her maternal pride. It was while engaged in the latter incomprehensible manner, that the lethargic Abner turned aside, and swallowing the unwonted emotions which were rising in his own throat, he observed—

"Mother means, that we should look for the signs, that we may know in what manner Asa has come by his end."

"We owe it to the accursed Siouxes!" answered Ishmael. "Twice have they put me deeply in their debt! The third time, the score shall be cleared!"

But, as if not content with this plausible explanation, and, perhaps, secretly

glad to avert their eyes from a spectacle which awakened such extraordinary and unusual sensations in their sluggish bosoms, the sons of the squatter turned away in a body from their mother and the corpse, and proceeded to make the inquiries which, they fancied, the former had so repeatedly demanded. Ishmael made no objections; but, though he accompanied his children, while they proceeded in the investigation, it was more with the appearance of complying with their wishes, at a time when resistance might not be seemly, than with any visible interest in the result. As the borderers, notwithstanding their usual dullness, were well instructed in most things connected with their habits of life, an inquiry, the success of which depended so much on signs and evidences, that bore so strong a resemblance to a forest trail, was likely to be conducted with skill and acuteness. Accordingly, they proceeded to the me-

lancholy task with great readiness and intelligence.

Abner and Enoch agreed in their accounts, as to the position in which they had found the body. It was seated nearly upright, the back supported by a mass of matted brush, and one hand still grasping a broken twig of the alders. It was, most probably, owing to the former circumstance, that the body had escaped the rapacity of the carrion birds, which had been seen hovering above the thicket; and the latter proved, that life had not yet entirely abandoned the hapless victim when he entered the brake. The opinion now became general, that the youth had received his death-wound in the open prairie, and had dragged his enfeebled form into the cover of the thicket, for the purpose of concealment. A trail through the bushes confirmed this opinion. It also appeared, on examination, that a desperate struggle had taken place on the very margin of the

thicket. This was sufficiently apparent, by the trodden branches, the deep impressions on the moist ground, and the lavish flow of blood.

"He has been shot in the open ground, and come here for a cover," said Abiram; "these marks would clearly prove it. The boy has been set upon by the savages in a body, and has fou't like a hero, as he was, until they have mastered his strength, and then drawn him to the bushes."

To this probable opinion, there was now but one dissenting voice, that of the slow-minded Ishmael, who demanded, that the corpse itself should be examined, in order to a more accurate knowledge of its injuries. On examination, it appeared that a rifle bullet had passed directly through the body of the deceased, entering beneath one of his brawny shoulders, and making its exit by the breast. It required some knowledge in gun-shot wounds, to decide this

delicate point; but the experience of the borderers was quite equal to the scrutiny; and a smile of wild, and certainly of singular satisfaction, passed among the sons of Ishmael, when Abner confidently announced, that the enemies of Asa had assailed him in the rear.

"It must be so," said the gloomy, but attentive squatter. "He was of too good a stock, and too well trained, knowingly to turn the weak side to man or beast! Remember, boys, that while the front of manhood is to your enemy, let him be who or what he may, you ar' safe from cowardly surprise.—Why, Esther, woman! you ar' getting beside yourself, with picking at the hair and the garments of the child! Little good can you do him now, old girl."

"See!" interrupted Enoch, extricating from the fragments of cloth the morsel of lead which had prostrated the strength of one so powerful; "Here is the very bullet."

Ishmael took it in his hand, and eyed it long and closely.

"There's no mistake;" at length he muttered, through his compressed teeth. "It is from the pouch of that accursed trapper. Like many of the hunters, he has a mark in his mould, in order to know the work his rifle performs; and here you see it plainly—six little holes, laid crossways."

"I'll swear to it!" cried Abiram, triumphantly. "He shew'd me his private mark, himself, and boasted of the number of deer he had laid upon the prairies with these very bullets! Now, Ishmael, will you believe me when I tell you, the old knave is a spy of the red-skins?"

The lead passed from the hand of one to that of another; and, unfortunately for the reputation of the old man, several among them remembered also to have seen the aforesaid private bullet-marks, during the curious examination

which all had made of his accoutrements. In addition to this wound, however, were many others of a less dangerous nature, all of which were supposed to confirm the supposed guilt of the trapper.

The traces of many different struggles were to be seen, between the spot where the first blood was spilt, and the thicket to which it was now generally believed Asa had retreated, as a place of refuge. These were interpreted into so many proofs of the weakness of the murderer, who would have sooner dispatched his victim, had not even the dying strength of the youth rendered him formidable to the infirmities of one so old. The danger of drawing some others of the hunters to the spot, by repeated firing, was deemed a sufficient reason for not again resorting to the rifle, after it had performed the important duty of disabling the victim. The weapon of the dead man was not to be found, and had,

doubtless, together with many other less valuable and lighter articles, that he was accustomed to carry about his person, become a prize to his destroyer.

But what, in addition to the tell-tale bullet, appeared to fix the ruthless deed with peculiar certainty on the trapper, was the accumulated evidence furnished by the trail; which proved, notwithstanding his deadly hurt, that the wounded man had still been able to make a long and desperate resistance to the subsequent efforts of his murderer. Ishmael seemed to press this proof with a singular mixture of sorrow and pride: sorrow, at the loss of a son, whom, in their moments of amity, he highly valued; and pride, at the courage and power he had manifested to his last and weakest breath.

"He died as a son of mine should die," said the squatter, gleaning a hollow consolation from so unnatural an exultation; "a dread to his enemy to

the last, and without help from the law! Come, children; we have first the grave to make, and then to hunt his murderer."

The sons of the squatter set about their melancholy office, in silence and in sadness. An excavation was made in the hard earth, at a great expense of toil and time, and the body was wrapped in such spare vestments as could be collected among the labourers. When these arrangements were completed, Ishmael approached the seemingly unconscious Esther, and announced his intention to inter the dead. She heard him, and quietly relinquished her grasp of the corpse, rising in silence to follow it to its narrow resting-place. Here she seated herself again at the head of the grave, watching each movement of the youths, with eager and jealous eyes. When a sufficiency of earth was laid upon the senseless clay of Asa, to protect it from injury, Enoch and Abner entered the cavity, and trode it into a

solid mass, by the weight of their huge frames, with an appearance of a strange, not to say savage, mixture of care and indifference. This well-known precaution was adopted, to prevent the speedy exhumation of the body, by some of the carnivorous beasts of the prairie, whose instinct was sure to guide them to the spot. Even the rapacious birds appeared to comprehend the nature of the ceremony: for, mysteriously apprised that the miserable victim was now about to be abandoned by the human race, they once more began to make their airy circuits above the place, screaming, as if to frighten the kinsmen from their labour of caution and love.

Ishmael stood with folded arms, steadily watching the manner in which this necessary duty was performed; and when the whole was completed, he lifted his cap to his sons, to thank them for their services, with a dignity that would

have become one much better nurtured. Throughout the whole of a ceremony which is ever solemn and admonitory, the squatter had maintained a grave and serious deportment. His vast features were visibly stamped with an expression of deep concern; but at no time did they falter, until he turned his back, as he believed for ever, on the grave of his first-born. Nature was then stirring powerfully within him, and the muscles of his stern visage began to work perceptibly. His children fastened their eyes on his, as if to seek a direction to the strange emotions which were moving their own heavy natures, when the struggle in the bosom of the squatter suddenly ceased; and taking his wife by the arm, he raised her to her feet as though she had been an infant, saying, n a voice that was perfectly steady, though a nice observer would have discovered that it was kinder than usual—

"Eester, we have now done all that man and woman can do. We raised the boy, and made him such as few others were like on the frontiers of America; and we have given him a grave. Let us go."

The woman turned her eyes slowly from the fresh earth, and laying her hands on the shoulders of her husband, stood looking him anxiously in the eyes for many moments, before she uttered in a voice, deep, frightful, and nearly choked—

"Ishmael! Ishmael! you parted from the boy in your wrath!"

"May the Lord pardon his sins freely as I have forgiven his worst misdeeds!" calmly returned the squatter. "Woman, go you back to the rock and read in your Bible: a chapter in that book always does you good. You *can* read, Eester; which is a privilege I never did enjoy."

"Yes, yes," muttered the woman,

yielding to his strength, and suffering herself to be led, though with powerful reluctance, from the spot. "I *can* read; and how have I used the knowledge! But he, Ishmael, he has not the sin of wasted l'arning to answer for. We have spared him *that*, at least: whether it be i[illegible] mercy, or in cruelty, I know not."

Her husband made no reply, but con-[illegible]nued steadily to lead her in the direc-[illegible]on of their temporary abode. When [illegible]hey reached the summit of the swell of [illegible]and, which they knew was the last spot [illegible]rom which the situation o[illegible] [illegible]ne grave of [illegible]sa could be seen, they all turned, as by [illegible]ommon concurrence, to take a farewell [illegible]iew of the place. The little mound [illegible]tself was not visible; but it was fright-[illegible]ully indicated by the flock of screaming [illegible]irds which hovered above it. In the [illegible]pposite direction, a low, blue hillock, [illegible] the skirts of the horizon, pointed out [illegible]e place where Esther had left the rest [illegible]her young, and served as an attraction

to draw her reluctant steps from the last abode of her eldest son. Nature quickened in the bosom of the mother at the sight, and she finally yielded the rights of the dead, to the more urgent claims of the living.

The foregoing occurrences had struck a spark from the stern tempers of a se of beings so singularly moulded in the habits of their uncultivated lives, which served to keep alive among them the dying embers of family affection. United to their parents by ties no stronger than those which nature had created, there had been great danger, as Ishmael had foreseen, that the overloaded hive would quickly swarm, and leave him saddled with the difficulties of a young and helpless brood, unsupported by the exertions of those whom he had already brought to a state of maturity. The spirit of insubordination, which emanated from the unfortunate Asa, had spread among his juniors, and the squatter ha

been made painfully to remember the time when, in the wantonness of his youth and vigor, he had, reversing the order of the brutes, cast off his own aged and failing parents, to enter into the world unshackled and free. But the danger had now abated, for a time at least; and if his authority was not restored with all its former influence, it was visibly admitted to exist, and to maintain its ascendancy a little longer.

It is true, that his slow-minded sons, even while they submitted to the impressions of the recent event, had glimmerings of terrible distrusts, as to the manner in which their elder brother had met with his death. There were faint and indistinct images in the minds of two or three of the oldest, which pourtrayed the father himself, as ready to imitate the example of Abraham, without the justification of the sacred authority which commanded the holy man to attempt the revolting office. But

then, these images were so transient, and so much obscured in intellectual mists, as to leave no very strong impressions; and the tendency of the whole transaction, as we have already said, was rather to strengthen than to weaken the authority of Ishmael.

In this disposition of mind, the party continued their route towards the place whence they had that morning issued, on a search which had been crowned with so melancholy a success. The long and fruitless march which they had made under the direction of Abiram, the discovery of the body and its subsequent interment, had so far consumed the day, that, by the time their steps were retraced across the broad tract of waste which lay between the grave of Asa and the rock, the sun had fallen far below his meridian altitude. The hill had gradually risen as they approached, like some tower emerging from the bosom of the sea, and when within a

..e, the minuter objects that crowned its height came dimly into view.

"It will be a sad meeting for the girls!" said Ishmael, who, from time to time, did not cease to utter something which he intended should be consolatory to the bruised spirit of his stricken partner. "Asa was much regarded by all the young; and seldom failed to bring in from his hunts something that they loved."

"He did, he did," murmured Esther; "the boy was the pride of the family.—My other children are as nothing to him!"

"Say not so, good woman," returned the father, glancing his eye a little proudly at the athletic train which followed, at no great distance, in the rear. "Say not so, old Eester; for few fathers and mothers have greater reason to be boastful than ourselves."

"Thankful, thankful," muttered the

humbled woman, "ye mean thank... Ishmael!"

"Then thankful let it be, if you like the word better, my good girl,—but what has become of Nelly and the young! The child has forgotten the charge I gave her, and has not only suffered the children to sleep, but, I warrant you, is dreaming of the fields of Tenessee at this very moment. The mind of your niece is mainly fixed on the settlements, I reckon."

"Ay, she is not for us; I said it, and thought it, when I took her, because death had stripped her of all other friends. Death is a sad worker in the bosom of families, Ishmael! Asa had a kind feeling to the child, and they might have come one day into our places, had things been so ordered."

"Nay, she is not gifted for a frontier wife, if this is the manner she is to keep house while the husband is on the hunt.

..r, let off your rifle, that they may ..w we ar' coming. I fear Nelly and the young ar' asleep."

The young man complied with an alacrity that manifested how gladly he would see the rounded, active figure of Ellen, enlivening the rugged summit of the rock. But the report was succeeded neither by signal nor answer of any sort. For a moment the whole party stood in suspense, awaiting the result, and then a simultaneous impulse caused the whole to let off their pieces at the same instant, producing a noise which might not fail to reach the ears of all within so short a distance.

"Ah! there they come at last!" cried Abiram, who was usually among the first to seize on any circumstance which promised relief from disagreeable apprehensions.

"It is a petticoat fluttering on the line," said Esther. "I put it there myself."

"You ar' right; but now she co
the jade has been taking her comfo.
the tent!"

"It is not so," said Ishmael, whose usually inflexible features were beginning to manifest the uneasiness he violently felt. "It is the tent itself blowing about loosely in the wind. They have loosened the bottom, like silly children as they ar', and unless care is had, the whole will come down!"

The words were scarcely uttered, before a hoarse, rushing blast of wind, swept by the spot where they stood, raising the dust into little eddies in its progress; and then, as if guided by a master hand, it quitted the earth, and mounted in its progress to the precise spot, on which all eyes were just then rivetted. The loosened linen felt its influence and tottered; but regained its poise, and, for a moment, it became tranquil. The cloud of leaves next played in circling revolutions around the

place, and then descended with the velocity of a swooping hawk, and sailed away into the prairie in long straight lines, like a flight of swallows resting on their expanded wings. They were followed for some distance by the snow-white tent, which, however, soon fell behind the rock, leaving its highest peak as naked as when it lay in the entire solitude of the desert.

"The murderers have been here!" moaned Esther. "My babes! my babes!"

For a moment even Ishmael faltered before the weight of such an unexpected blow. But shaking himself, like an awakened lion, he sprang forward, and pushing aside the impediments of the barrier, as though they had been feathers, he rushed up the ascent with an impetuosity which proved how formidable a sluggish nature may become, when thoroughly aroused.

CHAPTER III.

Whose party do the townsmen yet admit?
King John.

In order to preserve an even pace between the incidents of the tale, it becomes necessary to revert to such events as occurred during the ward of Ellen Wade.

For the few first hours, the cares of the honest and warm-hearted girl were confined to the simple offices of satisfying the often-repeated demands which her younger associates made on her time and patience, under the pretences of hunger, thirst, and all the other ceaseless wants of captious and incon-

siderate childhood. She had seized a moment from their importunities to steal into the tent, where she was administering to the comforts of one far more deserving of her tenderness, when an outcry, which arose among the children she had left, recalled her to the duties she had momentarily forgotten.

"See, Nelly, see!" exclaimed half a dozen eager voices, as she re-appeared among them, "yonder ar' men; and Phœbe says that they ar' Sioux-Indians!"

Ellen turned her eyes in the direction in which so many arms were already extended, and, to her consternation, beheld the forms of several men, who were advancing, manifestly and swiftly, in a straight line towards the rock. She counted four, but was unable to make out any thing concerning their characters, except that they were not any of those who of right were entitled to ad-

mission into the fortress. It was a fearful moment for Ellen. Looking around at the juvenile and frightened flock that pressed upon the skirts of her garments, she endeavoured to recall to her confused faculties, some one of the many tales of female heroism, with which the history of the western frontier abounded. In one, a stockade had been successfully defended by a single man, supported by three or four women, for days, against the assaults of a hundred enemies. In another, the women alone had been able to protect the children, and less valuable effects of their absent husbands; and a third was not wanting, in which a solitary female had destroyed her sleeping captors, and given liberty, not only to herself, but to a brood of timid and helpless young. This was the case most nearly assimilated to the situation in which Ellen now found herself; and, with flushing cheeks and

kindling eyes, the encouraged girl began to consider of, and to prepare her slender means of defence.

She posted the larger girls at the little levers that were to cast the rocks on the assailants, the smaller were to be used more for show than any positive service they could perform, while, like any other leader, she was reserved in her own person, as a superintendent and encourager of the whole. When these dispositions were made, she endeavoured to await the issue, with an air of composure, that she intended should inspire her assistants with the confidence necessary to insure their success.

Although Ellen was vastly their superior in that spirit which emanates from moral qualities, she was by no means the equal of the two eldest daughters of Esther, in the not less important military property of insensibility to danger. Reared in all the hardihood of a constantly migrating life, on the

skirts of society, where they had become familiarized to the sights and dangers of the wilderness, these girls promised fairly to become, at some future day, no less distinguished than their mother for their daring, and for that singular mixture of good and evil, which, in a wider sphere of action, would probably have enabled the wife of the squatter to have enrolled her name among the remarkable females of her time. Esther had already, on one occasion, made good the log tenement of Ishmael against an inroad of savages; and on another, she had been left for dead by her enemies, after a defence that, with a more civilized foe, would have entitled her to the honours and attentions of a liberal capitulation. These facts, and sundry others of a similar nature, had often been recapitulated with a suitable exultation in the presence of her daughters, and the bosoms of the young Amazons were now strangely fluctuating

between natural terror and the ambitious wish to do something that might render them worthy of being the children of such a mother. It now appeared that the opportunity for distinction, of this wild and unnatural character, was no longer to be denied them.

The party of strangers was already within a hundred rods of the rock. Either consulting their usual wary method of advancing, or, admonished by the threatening attitudes of the two figures, who had thrust forth the barrels of as many old muskets, from behind their stone entrenchment, the new comers halted, under favour of an inequality in the ground, where a growth of grass, thicker than common, offered them the advantage of a place of concealment. From this spot, they reconnoitred the fortress for several anxious, and, to Ellen, apparently interminable minutes. Then one advanced singly,

and apparently more in the character of a herald than of an assailant.

"Phœbe, *do you* fire," and, "No, Hetty, *you*," were beginning to be heard between the half-frightened, and yet eager daughters of the squatter, when Ellen, probably, saved the advancing stranger from some imminent alarm, if from no greater danger, by exclaiming—

"Lay down the muskets; it is Dr. Battius!"

Her subordinates complied, so far as to withdraw their hands from the locks, though the threatening barrels still maintained their portentous levels. The naturalist, who had advanced with sufficient deliberation to note the smallest hostile demonstration made by the garrison, now raised a white handkerchief on the end of his own fusee, and came within speaking distance of the fortress. Then assuming what he intended should be an imposing and dignified semblance

of authority, he blustered forth, in a voice that might have been heard at a much greater distance—

"What, ho! I summon ye all, in the name of the Confederacy of the United Sovereign States of North America, to submit yourselves to the laws."

"Doctor, or no Doctor; he is an enemy, Nelly; hear him! hear him! he talks of the law."

"Stop! stay till I hear his anwer!" said the nearly breathless Ellen, pushing aside the dangerous weapons, which were again pointed in the direction of the shrinking person of the herald.

"I admonish and forewarn ye all," continued the startled Doctor, "that I am a peaceful citizen of the before-named Confederacy, a supporter of the Social Compact, and a lover of good order and amity;" then, perceiving that the danger was, at least, temporarily removed, he once more raised his voice to the hostile pitch, and continued — "I

charge ye all, therefore, to submit to the laws."

"I thought you were a friend," Ellen replied; "and that you travelled with my uncle, in virtue of an agreement—"

"It is void! I have been deceived in the very premises, and I hereby pronounce a certain compactum entered into and concluded between Ishmael Bush, squatter, and Obed Battius, M.D. to be incontinently null, and of non-effect. Nay, children, to be null is merely a negative property, and is fraught with no evil to your worthy parent; so lay aside the fire-arms, and listen to the admonitions of reason. I declare it vicious—null—abrogated. As for thee, Nelly, my feelings towards thee are kind, and not at all given to hostility; therefore, listen to that which I have to utter, nor turn away thine ears in the wantonness of security. Thou knowest the character of the man with whom thou dwellest, young woman, and thou also knowest

the danger of being found in evil company. Abandon, then, the trifling advantages of thy situation, and yield the rock peaceably to the will of those who accompany me—a legion, young woman—I do assure you, an invincible and powerful legion. Give, therefore, the effects of this lawless and wicked squatter—nay, children, such disregard of human life, is literally destroying the pleasures of all amicable intercourse! Point those dangerous weapons aside, I entreat of you; more for your own sakes, than for mine. Hetty, hast thou forgotten who appeased thine anguish, when thy auricular nerves were tortured by the colds and damps of the naked earth! and thou, Phœbe, ungrateful and forgetful Phœbe, but for this very arm, which you would prostrate with an endless paralysis, thy incisores would still be giving thee pain and sorrow! Lay, then, aside thy weapons, and hearken to the advice of one who has always been

thy friend. And now, young woman," still keeping a jealous eye on the muskets, which the girls had suffered to be diverted a little from their aim—"And now, young woman, for the last, and, therefore, the most solemn asking, I demand of thee the surrender of this rock, without delay or resistance, in the joint names of power, of justice, and of the—" law, he would have added; but, recollecting that this ominous word would again provoke the hostility of the squatter's children, he succeeded in swallowing it in good season, and concluded with the less dangerous and more convertible term of "reason."

This extraordinary summons failed, however, of producing the desired effect. It proved utterly unintelligible to his younger listeners, with the exception of the few offensive terms, already sufficiently distinguished; and, though Ellen better comprehended the meaning of the herald, she appeared as little

moved by his rhetoric as her companions. At those passages, which he intended should be tender and affecting, the intelligent girl, though tortured by painfully contending feelings, had even manifested a disposition to laugh, while to the threats she turned an utterly insensible ear.

"I know not the meaning of all you wish to say, Dr. Battius," she quietly replied, when he had ended; "but I am sure, if it would teach me to betray my trust, it is what I ought not to hear. I caution you to attempt no violence, for let my wishes be what they may, you see I am surrounded by a force that can easily put me down; and you know, or ought to know, too well the temper of this family, to trifle in such a matter with any of its members, let them be of what sex or age they may."

"I am not entirely ignorant of human character," returned the naturalist, pru-

dently receding a little from the position which he had, until now, stoutly maintained at the very base of the hill. "But here comes one, who may know its secret windings still better than I."

"Ellen! Ellen Wade," cried Paul Hover, who had advanced to his elbow, without betraying any of that sensitiveness on the subject of danger, which had so manifestly discomposed the Doctor; "I didn't expect to find an enemy in you!"

"Nor shall you, when you ask that which I can grant without treachery and disgrace. You know that my uncle has trusted his family to my care, and shall I so far betray the trust as to let in his bitterest enemies to murder his children, perhaps, and to rob him of the little which the Indians have left!"

"Am I a murderer—is this old man—this officer of the States," pointing to the trapper and his newly discovered

friend, both of whom by this time stood at his side, "is either of these likely to do the things you name?"

"What is it then you ask of me?" said Ellen, wringing her hands, in the pain of excessive doubt.

"The beast! nothing more nor less than the squatter's hidden, ravenous, dangerous beast!"

"Excellent young woman," commenced the young stranger, who had so lately joined himself to the party on the prairie—but his mouth was immediately stopped by a significant sign from the trapper, who whispered in his private ear—

"Let the lad be our spokesman. Natur' *will* work in the bosom of the child, and we shall gain our object all in good time."

"The whole truth is out, Ellen," Paul continued, "and we have lined the squatter into his most secret misdoings. We have come to right the wronged, and

to free the imprisoned; now, if you are the girl of a true heart, as I have always believed, so far from throwing straws in our way, you will join in the general swarming, and leave old Ishmael and his hive to the bees of his own breed."

"I have sworn a solemn oath—"

"A compactum which is entered into through ignorance, or in duresse, is null in the sight of all good moralists," cried the Doctor.

"Hush, hush," again the trapper whispered, "leave it all to natur' and the lad!"

"I have sworn in the sight and by the name of Him who is the founder and ruler of all that is good, whether it be in morals or in religion," the agitated Ellen continued, "neither to reveal the contents of that tent, nor to help its prisoner to escape. We are both solemnly, terribly sworn; our lives, perhaps, have been the gift we received for the promises. It is true you are masters of the secret, but

not through any means of ours; nor do I know that I can justify myself, for even being neutral, while you attempt to invade the dwelling of my uncle in such a hostile manner."

"I can prove beyond the power of refutation," the naturalist eagerly exclaimed, "by Payley, Berkley, ay, even by the immortal Binkerschoef, that a compactum, concluded while one of the parties, be it a state or be it an individual, is in durance—"

"You will ruffle the temper of the child, with such abusive language," said the cautious trapper, "while the lad, if left to human feelings, will bring her down to the meekness of a playful fawn. Ah! you are like myself, little knowing in the natur' of these sorts of hidden kindnesses!"

"Is this the only vow you have taken, Ellen!" Paul continued in a tone which, for the gay, light-hearted bee-hunter, sounded dolorous and reproachful.—

"Have you sworn only to this! are the words which the squatter says, to be as honey in your mouth, and all other promises like so much useless comb?"

The paleness, which had taken possession of the usually cheerful countenance of Ellen, was hid in a bright glow, that was plainly visible even at the distance at which she stood. She hesitated a moment, as if struggling to repress something very like resentment, before she answered with all her native spirit—

"I know not what right any one has to question me about oaths and promises, which can only concern her who has made them, if indeed any of the sort you mention have ever been made at all. I shall hold no further discourse with one who thinks so much of himself, and takes advice merely of his own feelings."

"Now, old trapper, do you hear that!" said the unsophisticated bee-hunter, turning abruptly to his aged friend. "The meanest insect that skims the

heavens, when it has got its load, flies straight and honestly to its nest or hive, according to its kind; but the ways of a woman's mind are as knotty as a gnarled oak, and more crooked than the windings of the Mississipi!"

"Nay, nay, child," said the trapper, good-naturedly interfering in behalf of the offending Paul, "you are to consider that youth is hasty and not overgiven to thought. But then a promise is a promise, and not to be thrown aside and forgotten, like the hoofs and horns of a buffalo."

"I thank you for reminding me of my oath," said the still resentful Ellen, biting her pretty nether lip with vexation; "I might else have proved forgetful!"

"Ah! female natur' is awakened in her," said the old man, shaking his head in a manner to shew how much he was disappointed in the result, "but it manifests itself against the true spirit!"

"Ellen!" cried the young stranger, who until now had been an attentive listener to the parley, "since Ellen is the name by which you are known—"

"They often add to it another. I am sometimes called by the name of my father."

"Call her Nelly Wade at once," muttered Paul; "it is her rightful name, and I care not if she keeps it for ever!"

"Wade, I should have added," continued the youth. "You will acknowledge that though bound by no oath myself, I at least have known how to respect those of others. You are a witness yourself that I have forborne to utter a single call, while I am certain it could reach those ears it would gladden so much. Permit me then to ascend the rock, singly: I promise a perfect indemnity to your kinsman, against any injury his effects may sustain."

Ellen seemed to hesitate, but catch-

ing a glimpse of Paul, who stood leaning proudly on his rifle, whistling, with an appearance of the utmost indifference, the air of a boating song, she recovered her recollection in time to answer:

"I have been left the captain of the rock, while my uncle and his sons hunt, and captain will I remain, till he returns to receive back the charge."

"This is wasting moments that will not soon return, and neglecting an opportunity that may never occur again," the young soldier gravely remarked. "The sun is beginning to fall already, and many minutes cannot elapse before the squatter and his savage brood will be returning to their huts."

Doctor Battius cast an anxious glance behind him, and took up the discourse, by saying—

"Perfection is always found in maturity, whether it be in the animal or the intellectual world. Reflection is the mother of wisdom, and wisdom the

parent of success. I propose that we retire to a discreet distance from this impregnable position, and there hold a convocation or council, to deliberate on what manner we may sit down regularly before the place, or perhaps by postponing the siege to another season, gain the aid of auxiliaries from the inhabited countries, and thus secure the dignity of the laws from any danger of a repulse."

"A storm would be better," the soldier smilingly answered, measuring the height and scanning all it's difficulties with a deliberate eye; "'twould be but a broken arm or a bruised head at the most."

"Then have at it!" shouted the impetuous bee-hunter, making a spring that at once put him out of danger from a shot, by carrying him beneath the projecting ledge on which the garrison was posted; "now do your worst, young devils of a wicked breed; you have but a moment to work all your mischief in!"

"Paul! rash Paul!" shrieked Ellen, "another step, and the rocks will crush you! they hang but by a thread, and these girls are ready and willing to let them fall!"

"Then drive the accursed swarm from the hive; for scale the rock I will, though I find it covered with hornets."

"Let her, if she dare!" tauntingly cried the eldest of the girls, brandishing a musket with a mien and resolution that would have done credit to her Amazonian dam.—"I know you, Nelly Wade, you are with the lawyers in your heart, and if you come a foot nigher, you shall have frontier punishment. Put in another pry, girls; in with it. I should like to see the man of them all that dare come up into the camp of Ishmael Bush, without asking leave of his children!"

"Stir not, Paul; for your life, keep beneath the rock!—"

Ellen was interrupted by the same

bright vision, which on the preceding day had stayed another scarcely less portentous tumult, by exhibiting itself on the same giddy height where it was now seen.

"In the name of Him, who commandeth all, I implore you to pause—both you, who so madly incur the risk, and you, who so rashly offer to take that which you never can return!" said a sweet, imploring voice, in a slightly foreign accent, that instantly drew all eyes upward.

"Inez, Inez!" cried the officer, "do I again see you! mine shall you now be, though a million devils were posted on this rock. Push up, my brave woodsman, and give room for another."

The sudden appearance of the figure from the tent had created a momentary stupor among the defendants of the rock, which might, with suitable forbearance, have been happily improved; but, startled by the voice of Middleton, the

surprised Phœbe discharged her musket at the female, scarcely knowing whether she aimed at the life of a mortal, or at some being which belonged to another world. Ellen uttered a cry of horror, and then sprang after her alarmed or wounded friend, she knew not which, into the tent.

During this moment of dangerous by-play, the sounds of a serious attack were very distinctly audible beneath. Paul had profited by the commotion over his head, to change his place, so far as to make room for Middleton. The latter had been followed by the naturalist, who, in a state of mental aberration produced by the report of the musket, had instinctively rushed towards the rocks for a cover. The trapper remained where he was last seen, an unmoved but close observer of these several proceedings. Though averse to enter into actual hostilities, the old man was, however, far from being useless.

Favoured by his position, he was enabled to apprise his friends beneath, of the movements of those who plotted their destruction above, and to advise and controul their advance accordingly.

In the mean time, the children of Esther were true to the spirit they had inherited from their redoubtable mother. The instant they found themselves delivered from the presence of Ellen and her unknown companion, they bestowed an undivided attention on their more masculine, and certainly more dangerous, assailants, who by this time had made a complete lodgment among the crags of the citadel. The repeated summons to surrender, which Paul uttered in a voice that he intended should strike terror to their young bosoms, were as little heeded, as were the calls of the trapper to abandon a resistance, which might prove fatal to some among them, without offering the smallest probability of eventual success.

Encouraging each other to persevere, they poised the fragments of rocks, prepared the lighter missiles for immediate service, and thrust forward the barrels of the muskets with a business-like air, and a coolness that would have done credit to men long practised in the dangers of warfare.

"Keep under the ledge," said the trapper, pointing out to Paul the manner in which he should proceed; "keep in your foot more, lad—ah! you see the warning was not amiss! had the stone struck it, the bees would miss their companion for many a month. Now, namesake of my friend; Uncas, in name and spirit! now, if you have the activity of Le Cerf Agile, now you may make a far leap to the right, and gain good twenty feet of height, without danger. Beware the bush—beware the bush! 'twill prove a treacherous hold! Ah! he has done it; safely and bravely has he done it! Your turn comes next,

friend, that follow the fruits of natur'. Push you to the left, and you will divide the attention of the children. Nay, girls, fire—my old ears are used to the whistling of lead; and little reason have I to prove a doe-heart, with fourscore years on my back." He shook his head with a melancholy smile, but without flinching in a muscle, as the bullet which the exasperated Hetty fired, passed innocently at no great distance from the spot where he stood. "It is safer keeping in your track, than dodging when a weak finger pulls the trigger," he continued; "but it is a solemn sight to witness, how much human natur' is inclined to evil, in one so young! Well done, my man of beasts and plants! Another such leap, and you may laugh at all the squatter's bars and walls. The Doctor has got his temper up! I see it in his eye, and something good will now come of him! Keep closer, man—keep closer."

The trapper, though he was not deceived as to the state of Dr. Battius' mind, was, however, greatly in error as to the exciting cause. While imitating the movements of his companions, and toiling his way upward, with the utmost caution, and not without great inward tribulation of spirit, the eye of the naturalist had caught a glimpse of an unknown plant, a few yards above his head, and in a situation more than commonly exposed to the missiles which the girls were unceasingly hurling in the direction of the assailants. Forgetting, in an instant, every thing but the glory of being the first to give this jewel to the catalogues of science, he sprang upward at the prize, with the avidity with which the sparrow darts upon the butterfly. The rocks, which instantly came thundering down, announced that he was seen, and for a moment, as his form was concealed in the cloud of dust and fragments which followed the furious de-

scent, the trapper gave him up for lost; but the next instant he was seen safely seated in a cavity, formed by some of the projecting stones which had yielded to the shock, holding triumphantly in his hand the captured stem, which he was already devouring with delighted, and certainly not unskilful eyes. Paul profited by the opportunity. Turning his course with the quickness of thought, he also sprang to the post which Obed thus securely occupied, and unceremoniously making a footstool of his shoulder, as the latter stooped over his treasure, he bounded through the breach left by the fallen rock, and gained the level. He was followed by Middleton, who joined him in seizing and disarming the girls. In this manner a bloodless and complete victory was obtained over that citadel, which Ishmael had vainly flattered himself might prove impregnable, for the short period of his absence.

CHAPTER IV.

> So smile the heavens upon this holy act,
> That after-hours with sorrow chide us not.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

IT is proper that the course of the narrative should be stayed, while we revert to those causes, which have brought in their train of consequences, the singular contest just related. The interruption must necessarily be as brief, as we hope it may prove satisfactory, to that class of readers, who require that no gap should be left by those who assume the office of historians, for their own fertile imaginations to fill.

Among the troops sent by the govern-

ment of the Confederacy to take possession of its newly acquired territory in the west, was a detachment led by the young soldier who has become so busy an actor in the scenes of our legend. The mild and indolent descendants of the ancient colonists received their new compatriots without distrust; well knowing that the transfer raised them from the condition of subjects, to the more enviable distinction of citizens in a government of laws. The new rulers exercised their functions with discretion, and wielded their delegated authority without offence. In such a novel intermixture, however, of men born and nurtured in freedom, and the compliant minions of absolute power, the Catholic and the Protestant, the active and the indolent, some little time was necessary to blend the discrepant elements of society. In attaining so desirable an end, woman was made to perform her accustomed and grateful office. The

barriers of prejudice and religion were broken through by the irresistible power of the master-passion; and family unions, ere long, began to cement the political tie which had made a forced conjunction between people so opposite in their habits, their educations, and their opinions.

Middleton was among the first of the new possessors of the soil, who became captive to the charms of a Louisianian lady. In the immediate vicinity of the post he had been directed to occupy, dwelt the chief of one of those ancient colonial families, which had been content to slumber for ages amid the ease, indolence, and wealth of the Spanish provinces. He was an officer of the crown, and had been induced to remove from the Floridas, among the French of the adjoining province, by a rich succession of which he had become the inheritor. The name of Don Augustin de Certavallos was scarcely known beyond

the limits of the little town in which he resided, though he found a secret pleasure himself in pointing it out, in large scrolls of musty documents, to an only child, as enrolled among the former heroes and grandees of old and of new Spain. This fact, so important to himself, and of so little moment to any body else, was the principal reason that, while his more vivacious Gallic neighbours were not slow to open a frank communion with their visitors, he chose to keep aloof, seemingly content with the society of his daughter, who was a girl just emerging from the condition of childhood into that of a woman.

The curiosity of the youthful Inez, however, was not so entirely inactive. She had not heard the martial music of the garrison, melting on the evening air, nor seen the strange banner which fluttered over the heights that rose at no great distance from her father's extensive grounds, without experiencing some of

those secret impulses which are thought to distinguish her sex. Natural timidity, and that retiring and perhaps peculiar lassitude which forms the very groundwork of female fascination in the tropical provinces of Spain, held her in their seemingly indissoluble bonds; and it is more than probable, that had not an accident occurred in which Middleton was of some personal service to her father, so long a time would have elapsed before they met, that another direction might have been given to the wishes of one who was just of an age to be alive to all the power of youth and beauty.

Providence—or if that imposing word is too just to be classical, Fate—had otherwise decreed. The haughty and reserved Don Augustin was by far too observant of the forms of that station on which he so much valued himself, to forget the duties of a gentleman. Gratitude for the kindness of Middleton,

induced him to open his doors to the officers of the garrison, and to admit of a guarded but polite intercourse. Reserve gradually gave way before the propriety and candour of their spirited young leader, and it was not long ere the affluent planter rejoiced as much as his daughter, whenever the well-known signal at the gate announced one of these agreeable visits from the commander of the post.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the impression which the charms of Inez pro duced on the soldier; or to delay the tale in order to write a wire-drawn account of the progressive influence that elegance of deportment, manly beauty, and undivided assiduity and intelligence were likely to produce on the sensitive mind of a romantic, warm-hearted, and secluded girl of sixteen. It is sufficient for our purpose to say that they loved; that the youth was not backward to declare his feelings; that he prevailed

with some facility over the scruples of the maiden, and with no little difficulty over the objections of her father ; and that, before the province of Louisiana had been six months in the possession of the States, the officer of the latter was the affianced husband of the richest heiress on the banks of the Mississipi.

Although we have presumed the reader to be acquainted with the manner in which such results are commonly attained, it is not to be supposed that the triumph of Middleton, either over the prejudices of the father or of those of the daughter, was achieved entirely without difficulty. Religion formed a stubborn and nearly irremoveable obstacle with both. The devoted young man patiently submitted to a formidable essay which father Ignatius was deputed to make in order to convert him to the true faith. The effort on the part of the worthy priest was systematic, vigorous, and long sustained. A dozen times (it

was at those moments when glimpses of the light, sylph-like form of Inez flitted like some fairy being past the scene of their conferences) the good father fancied he was on the eve of a glorious triumph over infidelity; but all his hopes were frustrated by some unlooked-for opposition on the part of the subject of his pious labours. So long as the assault on his faith was distant and feeble, Middleton, who was no great proficient in polemics, submitted to its effects with the patience and humility of a martyr; but the moment the good father, who felt such concern in his future happiness, was tempted to improve his vantage ground by calling in the aid of some of the peculiar subtleties of his own creed, the young man was too good a soldier not to make head against the hot attack. He came to the contest, it is true, with no weapons more formidable than common sense, and some little knowledge of the habits of his country, as contrasted

with that of his adversary; but with these home-bred implements he never failed to repulse the father with something of the power with which a nervous cudgel-player would deal with a skilful master of the rapier, setting at naught his passados by the direct and unanswerable arguments of a broken head and a shivered weapon.

Before the controversy was terminated, an inroad of Protestants had come to aid the soldier. The reckless freedom of such among them as thought only of this life, and the consistent and tempered piety of others, caused the honest priest to look about him in concern. The influence of example on one hand, and the contamination of too free an intercourse on the other, began to manifest themselves, even in that portion of his own flock which he had supposed to be too thoroughly folded in spiritual government ever to stray. It was time to turn his thoughts from the offensive,

and to prepare his followers to resist the lawless deluge of opinion which threatened to break down the barriers of their faith. Like a wise commander, who finds he has occupied too much ground for the amount of his force, he began to curtail his outworks. The relics were concealed from profane eyes; his people were admonished not to speak of miracles before a race that not only denied their existence, but who had even the desperate hardihood to challenge their proofs, and even the Bible itself was once more prohibited, with terrible denunciations, for the triumphant reason that it was liable to be misinterpreted.

In the mean time, it became necessary to report to Don Augustin the effects his arguments and prayers had produced on the heretical disposition of the young soldier. No man is prone to confess his weakness at the very moment when circumstances demand the utmost

efforts of his strength. By a species of pious fraud, for which, no doubt, the worthy priest found his absolution in the purity of his motives, he declared that while no positive change was actually wrought in the mind of Middleton, there was every reason to hope the entering wedge of argument had been driven to its head; and that, in consequence, an opening was left, through which, it might rationally be hoped, the blessed seeds of a religious fructification would find their way, especially if the subject was left uninterruptedly to enjoy the advantage of Catholic communion.

Don Augustin himself was now seized with the desire of proselyting. Even the soft and amiable Inez thought it would be a glorious consummation of her wishes to be a humble instrument of bringing her lover into the bosom of the true church. The offers of Middleton were promptly accepted; and,

while the father looked forward impatiently to the day assigned for the nuptials, as to the pledge of his own success, the daughter thought of it with feelings in which the holy emotions of her faith were blended with the softer sensations of her years and situation.

The sun rose the morning of her nuptials on a day so bright and cloudless, that the sensitive Inez hailed it as a harbinger of her future happiness. Father Ignatius performed the offices of the church, in a little chapel that was attached to the estate of Don Augustin, and long ere the sun had begun to fall, Middleton pressed the blushing and timid young Creole to his bosom, as his acknowledged and unalienable wife. It had pleased the parties to pass the day of the wedding in retirement, dedicating it solely to the best and purest affections, aloof from all the noisy and ordinarily heartless rejoicings of a compelled festivity.

Middleton was returning through the grounds of Don Augustin, from a visit of duty to his encampment, at that hour in which the light of the sun begins to melt into the shadows of evening, when a glimpse of a robe, similar to that in which Inez had accompanied him to the altar, caught his eye through the foliage of a retired arbour. He approached the spot with a delicacy that was rather increased than diminished by the claim she had perhaps given him to intrude on her private moments; but the sounds of her soft voice, which was offering up prayers, in which he heard himself named by the dearest of all appellations, overcame his scruples, and induced him to take a position where he might listen without fear of detection. It was certainly grateful to the feelings of a husband to be able in this manner to lay bare the spotless soul of his wife, and to find that his own image lay

enshrined amid its purest and holiest aspirations. His self-esteem was too much flattered not to induce him to overlook the immediate object of the petitioner. While she prayed that she might become the humble instrument of bringing him into the flock of the faithful, she petitioned for forgiveness on her own behalf, if presumption or indifference to the counsel of the church had caused her to set too high a value on her influence, and led her into the dangerous error of hazarding her own soul by espousing a heretic. There was so much of fervent piety, mingled with so strong a burst of natural feeling, so much of the woman blended with the angel in her prayers, that Middleton could have forgiven her, had she termed him a Pagan, for the sweetness and interest with which she petitioned in his favour.

The young man waited until his bride

arose from her knees, and then he joined her as though entirely ignorant of what had just occurred.

"It is getting late, my Inez," he said, "and Don Augustin would be apt to reproach you with inattention to your health in being abroad at such an hour. What then am I to do, who am charged with all his authority, and twice his love?"

"Be like him in *every* thing," she answered, looking up in his face with tears in her eyes, and speaking with a marked emphasis; "in *every* thing. Imitate my father, Middleton, and I can ask no more of you."

"Nor *for* me, Inez? I doubt not that I should be all you can wish, were I to become as good as the worthy and respectable Don Augustin. But you are to make some allowances for the infirmities and habits of a soldier. Now let us go and join this excellent father."

"Not yet," said his bride, gently ex-

tricating herself from the arm that he had thrown around her slight form, while he urged her from the place. "I have still another duty to perform, before I can submit so implicitly to your orders, soldier though you are. I promised the worthy Inesella, my faithful nurse, she who, as you heard, has so long been a mother to me, Middleton—I promised her a visit at this hour. It is the last, as she thinks, that she can receive from her own child, and I cannot disappoint her. Go you, then, to Don Augustin, and in one short hour I will rejoin you."

"Remember, it is but an hour!"

"One hour," repeated Inez, as she kissed her hand to him; and then blushing, as if ashamed at her own boldness, she darted from the arbour, and was seen for an instant, gliding towards the cottage of her nurse, in which at the next moment she disappeared.

Middleton returned slowly and thoughtfully to the house, often bend-

ing his eyes in the direction in which he had last seen his wife, as if he would fain trace her lovely form in the gloom of the evening, still floating through the vacant space. Don Augustin received him with warmth, and for many minutes his mind was amused by relating to his new kinsman plans for the future. The exclusive old Spaniard listened to his glowing, but true account, of the prosperity and happiness of those States of which he had been an ignorant neighbour half his life, partly in wonder, and partly with that sort of incredulity with which one attends to what he fancies are the exaggerated descriptions of a too partial friendship.

In this manner the hour for which Inez had conditioned passed away, much sooner than her husband could have thought possible in her absence. At length his looks began to wander to the clock, and then the minutes were counted, as one rolled by after another,

and Inez did not yet appear. The hand had already made half of another circuit around the face of the dial, when Middleton arose, and announced his determination to go and offer himself as an escort to the absentee. He found the night dark, and the heavens charged with the threatening vapour which, in that climate, was the infallible forerunner of a gust. Stimulated no less by the unpropitious aspect of the skies, than by his secret uneasiness, he quickened his pace, making long and rapid strides in the direction of the cottage of Inesella. Twenty times he stopped, fancying that he caught glimpses of the fairy form of Inez, tripping across the grounds on her return to the mansion-house, and as often he was obliged to resume his course in disappointment. He reached the gate of the cottage, knocked, opened the door, entered, and even stood in the presence of the aged nurse, without meeting the person of her

whom he sought. She had already left the place, and had returned to her father's house. Believing that he must have passed her in the darkness, Middleton retraced his steps, to meet with another disappointment. Inez had not been seen. Without communicating his intention to any one, the bridegroom proceeded with a palpitating heart to the little sequestered arbour, where he had overheard his bride offering up those petitions for his happiness and conversion. Here, too, he was disappointed; and then all was afloat, in the painful incertitude of doubt and conjecture.

For many hours, a secret distrust of the motives of his wife caused Middleton to proceed in the search with delicacy and caution. But as day dawned without restoring her to the arms of her father, or her husband, reserve was thrown aside, and her unaccountable absence was loudly proclaimed. The

inquiries after the lost Inez were now direct and open; but they proved equally fruitless. No one had seen her, or heard of her, from the moment that she left the cottage of her nurse.

Day succeeded day, and still no tidings rewarded the search that was immediately instituted, until she was finally given over, by most of her relations and friends, as irretrievably lost.

An event of so extraordinary a character was not likely to be soon forgotten. It excited speculation, gave rise to an infinity of rumours, and not a few inventions. The prevalent opinion, among such of those emigrants who were overrunning the country, as had time, in the multitude of their employments, to think of any foreign concerns, was the simple and direct conclusion, that the absent bride was no more nor less than a felo de se. Father Ignatius had many doubts, and much secret compunction of conscience; but, like a wise chief, he

endeavoured to turn the sad event to some account in the impending warfare of faith. Changing his battery, he whispered in the ears of a few of his oldest parishioners, that he had been deceived in the state of Middleton's mind, which he was now compelled to believe was completely stranded on the quicksands of heresy. He began to show his relics again,. and was even heard to allude once more to the delicate, and nearly forgotten, subject of modern miracles. In consequence of these demonstrations on the part of the venerable priest, it came to be whispered among the faithful, and finally it was adopted as part of the parish creed, that Inez had been translated to Heaven.

Don Augustin had all the feelings of a father, but they were smothered in the lassitude of a Creole. Like his spiritual governor, he began to think that they had been wrong in consigning one

so pure, so young, so lovely, and, above all, so pious, to the arms of a heretic; and he was fain to believe that the calamity which had befallen his age, was a judgment on his presumption and want of adherence to established forms. It is true, that as the whispers of the congregation came to his ears, he found present consolation in their belief; but then nature was too powerful, and had too strong a hold of the old man's heart, not to give rise to the rebellious thought, that the succession of his daughter to the heavenly inheritance was a little premature.

But Middleton, the lover, the husband, the bridegroom—Middleton was nearly crushed by the weight of the unexpected and terrible blow. Educated himself under the dominion of a simple and rational faith, in which nothing is attempted to be concealed from the believers, he could have no other apprehensions for the fate of Inez than

such as grew out of his knowledge of the superstitious opinions she entertained of his own church. It is needless to dwell on the mental tortures that he endured, or all the various surmises, hopes, and disappointments that he was fated to experience in the first few weeks of his misery. A jealous distrust of the motives of Inez, and a secret, lingering hope that he should yet find her, had tempered his inquiries, without, however, causing him to abandon them entirely. But time was beginning to deprive him even of the mortifying reflection, that he was intentionally, though perhaps temporarily, deserted, and he was gradually yielding to the more painful conviction that she was dead, when his hopes were suddenly revived in a new and singular manner.

The young commander was slowly and sorrowfully returning from an evening parade of his troops, to his own quar-

ters, which stood at some little distance from the place of the encampment, and on the same high bluff of land, when his vacant eyes fell on the figure of a man, who, by the regulations of the place, was not entitled to be there at that forbidden hour. The stranger was meanly dressed, with every appearance about his person and countenance of squalid poverty, and of the most dissolute habits. Sorrow had softened the military pride of Middleton, and as he passed the crouching form of the intruder, he said, in tones of great mildness, or rather of kindness—

"You will be given a night in the guard-house, friend, should the patrol find you here—there is a dollar—go, and get a better place to sleep in, and something to eat!"

"I swallow all my food, captain, without chewing," returned the vagabond, with the low exultation of an accomplished villain, as he eagerly seized

the silver. "Make this Mexican twenty, and I will sell you a secret."

"Go, go," said the other, with a little of a soldier's severity returning to his manner—"Go, before I order the guard to seize you."

"Well, go it is then—but if I do go, captain, I shall take my knowledge with me; and then you may live a widower bewitched till the tattoo of life is beat off."

"What mean you, fellow?" exclaimed Middleton, turning quickly towards the wretch, who was already dragging his diseased limbs from the place.

"I mean to have the value of this dollar in Spanish brandy, and then come back, and sell you my secret for enough to buy a barrel."

"If you have any thing to say, speak now," continued Middleton, restraining with difficulty the impatience that urged him to betray his feelings.

"I am a-dry, and I can never talk

with elegance when my throat is husky, captain. How much will you give to know what I can tell you? Let it be something handsome; such as one gentleman can offer to another."

"I believe it would be better justice to order the drummer to pay you a visit, fellow. To what does your boasted secret relate?"

"Matrimony; a wife and no wife; a pretty face and a rich bride. Do I speak plain now, captain?"

"If you know any thing relating to my wife, say it at once; you need not fear for your reward."

"Ay, captain, I have drove many a bargain in my time, and sometimes I have been paid in money, and sometimes I have been paid in promises: now the last are what I call pinching food."

"Name your price."

"Twenty—no, damn it, it's worth thirty dollars, if it's worth a cent."

"Here, then, is your money; but remember, if you tell me nothing worth knowing, I have a force that can easily deprive you of it again, and punish your insolence in the bargain."

The fellow examined the bank-bills he received with a jealous eye, and then pocketed them, apparently well satisfied of their being genuine.

"I like a northern note," he said, very coolly; "they have a character to lose, like myself. No fear of me, captain; I am a man of honour, and I shall not tell you a word more nor a word less than I know of my own knowledge to be true."

"Proceed, then, without further delay, or I may repent, and order you to be deprived of all your gains; the silver as well as the notes."

"Honour, if you die for it!" returned the miscreant, holding up a hand in affected horror, at so treacherous a threat. "Well, captain, you must know,

that gentlemen don't all live by the same calling; some keep what they've got, and some get what they can."

"You have been a thief."

"I scorn the word. I have been a humanity hunter. Do you know what that means? Ay, it has many interpretations. Some people think the woolly-heads are miserable, working on hot plantations under a broiling sun—and all such sorts of inconveniences. Well, captain, I have been, in my time, a man who has been willing to give them the pleasures of variety, at least, by changing the scene for them. You understand me?"

"You are, in plain language, a kidnapper."

"Have been, my worthy captain—have been; but just now a little reduced; like a merchant who leaves off selling tobacco by the hogshead, to deal in it by the yard. I have been a soldier, too, in my day. What is said to be

the great secret of our trade, now can you tell me that?"

"I know not," said Middleton, beginning to tire of the fellow's trifling; "courage?"

"No, legs—legs to fight with, and legs to run away with—and therein you see my two callings agreed. My legs are none of the best just now, and without legs a kidnapper would carry on a losing trade; but then there are men enough left, better provided than I am."

"Stolen!" groaned the horror-struck husband.

"On her travels, as sure as you are standing still!"

"Villain, what reason have you for believing a thing so shocking!"

"Hands off—hands off—do you think my tongue can do its work the better for a little squeezing of the throat! Have patience, and you shall know it all; but if you treat me so ungenteelly

again, I shall be obliged to call in the assistance of the lawyers."

"Say on; but if you utter a single word more or less than the truth, expect my instant vengeance!"

"Are you fool enough to believe what such a scoundrel as I am tells you, captain, unless it has probability to back it? No, I know you are not. Therefore I will give my facts and my opinions, and then leave you to chew on them, while I go and drink of your generosity. I know a man who is called Abiram White.—I believe the knave took that name to shew his enmity to the race of blacks! But this gentleman is now, and has been for years, to my certain knowledge, a regular translator of the human body from one State to another. —I have dealt with him in my time, and a cheating dog he is! No more honour in him than meat in my stomach. —I saw him here in this very town, the

day of your wedding. He was in company with his wife's brother, and pretended to be a settler on the hunt for new land. A noble set they were to carry on business—seven sons, each of them as tall as your serjeant with his cap on. Well, the moment I heard your wife was lost, I saw at once that Abiram had laid his hands on her."

"Do you know this—can this be true? What reason have you to fancy a thing so wild."

"Reason enough; I know Abiram White. Now, will you add a trifle just to keep my throat from parching?"

"Go, go; you are stupified with drink already, miserable man, and know not what you say. Go, go; and beware the drummer."

"Experience is a good guide"—the fellow called after the retiring Middleton, and then, turning with a chuckling laugh, like one well satisfied

with himself, he made the best of his way towards the shop of the suttler.

A hundred times in the course of that night did Middleton fancy that the communication of the miscreant was entitled to some attention, and as often did he reject the idea as too wild and visionary for another thought. He was awakened early on the following morning, after passing a restless and nearly sleepless night, by his orderly, who came to report that a man was found dead on the parade, at no great distance from his quarters. Throwing on his clothes he proceeded to the spot, and beheld the individual with whom he had the preceding conference, in the precise situation in which he had first been found.

The miserable wretch had fallen a victim to his intemperance. This revolting fact was sufficiently proclaimed by his obtruding eye-balls, his bloated coun-

tenance, and the nearly insufferable odours that were even then exhaling from his carcass. Disgusted with the odious spectacle, the youth was turning from the sight, after ordering the corpse to be removed, when the position of one of the dead man's hands struck him. On examination, he found the fore-finger extended, as if in the act of writing in the sand, with the following incomplete sentence, nearly illegible, but yet in a state to be decyphered: "Captain, it is true, as I am a gentle—" He had either died or fallen into a sleep which was the forerunner of his death, before the latter word was finished.

Concealing this fact from the others, Middleton repeated his orders and departed. The pertinacity of the deceased, and all the circumstances united, induced him to set on foot some secret inquiries. He found that a family, answering the description which had been given him, had in fact passed the place the very day

of his nuptials. They were traced along the margin of the Mississipi for some distance, until they took boat and ascended the river to its confluence with the Missouri. Here they had disappeared, like hundreds of others, in pursuit of the hidden wealth of the interior.

Furnished with these facts, Middleton selected a small guard of his most trusty men, took leave of Don Augustin, without declaring his hopes or his fears, and having arrived at the indicated point, he pushed into the wilderness in pursuit. It was not difficult to trace a train like that of Ishmael, until he was well assured its object lay far beyond the usual limits of the settlements. This circumstance in itself quickened his suspicions, and gave additional force to his hopes of final success.

After getting beyond the assistance of verbal directions, the anxious husband had recourse to the usual signs of a trail, in order to follow the fugitives. This he

also found a task of no difficulty until he reached the hard and unyielding soil of the rolling prairies. Here, indeed, he was completely at fault. He found himself, at length, compelled to separate his followers, appointing a place of rendezvous at a distant day, and to endeavour to find the lost trail by multiplying, as much as possible, the number of his eyes. He had been alone a week, when accident brought him in contact with the trapper and the bee-hunter. Part of their interview has been related, and the reader can readily imagine the explanations that succeeded the tale he recounted, and which led, as has already been seen, to the recovery of his bride.

CHAPTER V.

These likelihoods confirm her flight from hence.
Therefore, I pray you, stay not to discourse,
But mount you presently.

SHAKSPEARE.

An hour had slid by, in hasty and nearly incoherent questions and answers, before Middleton, hanging over his recovered treasure with that sort of jealous watchfulness with which a miser would regard his hoards, closed the disjointed narrative of his own proceedings by demanding—

"And you, my Inez, in what manner were you treated?"

"In every thing but the great injustice they did in separating me so forcibly from my friends, as well, perhaps, as the cir-

cumstances of my captors would allow. I think the man, who is certainly the master here, is but a new beginner in wickedness. He quarrelled frightfully in my presence with the wretch who seized me, and then they made an impious bargain, to which I was compelled to acquiesce, and to which they bound me as well as themselves by oaths. Ah! Middleton, I fear the heretics are not so heedful of their vows as we who are nurtured in the bosom of the true church!"

"Believe it not; these villains are of no religion. Did they forswear themselves?"

"No, not perjured: but was it not awful to call upon the good God to witness so sinful a compact?"

"And so we think, Inez, as truly as the most virtuous cardinal of Rome. But how did they observe their oath, and what was its purport?"

"They conditioned to leave me un-

molested, and free from their odious presence, provided I would give a pledge to make no effort to escape; and that I would not even show myself, until a time that my master saw fit to name."

"And that time?" demanded the impatient Middleton, who so well knew the religious scruples of his wife—"That time?"

"It is already passed. I was sworn by my patron saint, and faithfully did I keep the vow, until the man they call Ishmael forgot the terms by offering violence. I then made my appearance on the rock, for the time too was passed; though I even think Father Ignatius would have absolved me from the vow, on account of the treachery of my keepers."

"If he had not," muttered the youth between his compressed teeth, "I would have absolved him for ever from his spiritual care of your conscience!"

"You, Middleton!" returned his wife, looking up into his flushed face, while a

bright blush suffused her own sweet countenance; "you may *receive* my vows, but surely you can have no power to absolve me from their observance!"

"No, no, no. Inez, you are right. I know but little of these conscientious subtleties, and I am any thing but a priest: yet tell me, what has induced these monsters to play this desperate game—to trifle thus with my happiness?"

"You know my ignorance of the world, and how ill I am qualified to furnish reasons for the conduct of beings so different from any I have ever seen before. But does not love of money drive men to acts even worse than this? I believe they thought that an aged and wealthy father could be tempted to pay them a rich ransom for his child; and, perhaps," she added, stealing an inquiring glance, through her tears, at the attentive Middleton, "they counted something on the fresh affections of a bridegroom."

"They might have extracted the blood from my heart, drop by drop!"

"Yes," resumed his young and timid wife, instantly withdrawing the stolen look she had hazarded, and hurriedly pursuing the train of the discourse, as if glad to make him forget the liberty she had just taken, "I have been told, there are men so base as to perjure themselves at the altar, in order to command the gold of ignorant and confiding girls; and if love of money will lead to such baseness, we may surely expect it will hurry those who devote themselves to gain, into acts of lesser fraud."

"It must be so; and now, Inez, though I am here to guard you with my life, and we are in possession of this rock, our difficulties, perhaps our dangers, are not ended. You will summon all your courage to meet the trial, and prove yourself a soldier's wife, my Inez!"

"I am ready to depart this instant.

The letter you sent by the physician, had prepared me to hope for the best, and I have every thing arranged for flight at the shortest warning."

"Let us then leave this place and join our friends."

"Friends!" interrupted Inez, glancing her eyes around the little tent in quest of the form of Ellen. "I, too, have a friend who must not be forgotten, but who is pledged to pass the remainder of her life with us. She is gone!"

Middleton gently led her from the spot, as he smilingly answered—

"She may have had, like myself, her own private communications for some favoured ear."

The young man had not, however, done justice to the motives of Ellen Wade. The sensitive and intelligent girl had readily perceived how little her presence was necessary in the interview that has just been related, and had retired, with that intuitive delicacy of

feeling, which seems to belong more properly to her sex. She was now to be seen seated on a point of the rock, with her person so entirely enveloped in her dress as entirely to conceal her features. Here she had remained for near an hour, no one approaching to address her, and as it appeared to her own quick and jealous eyes, totally unobserved. In the latter particular, however, even the vigilance of the quick-sighted Ellen was deceived.

The first act of Paul Hover, on finding himself the master of Ishmael's citadel, had been to sound the note of victory, after the quaint and ludicrous manner that is so often practised among the borderers of the West. Flapping his sides with his hands, as the conquering game-cock is wont to do with his wings, he raised a loud and laughable imitation of the exultation of this bird; a cry which might have proved a dangerous challenge, had any one of the athletic

sons of the squatter been within hearing.

"This has been a regular knock-down and drag-out," he cried, "and no bones broke! How now, old trapper, you have been one of your training, platoon, rank-and-file soldiers in your day, and have seen forts taken and batteries stormed before this—am I right?"

"Ay, ay, that have I," answered the old man, who still maintained his post at the foot of the rock, so little disturbed by what he had just witnessed, as to return the grin of Paul, with a hearty indulgence in his own silent and peculiar laughter; "you have gone through the exploit like men!"

"Now tell me, is it not in rule, to call over the names of the living, and to bury the dead, after every bloody battle?"

"Some did and other some didn't. When Sir William push'd the German, Dieskau, thro' the defiles at the foot of the Hori—"

"Your Sir William was a drone to Sir Paul, and knew nothing of regularity. So here begins the roll call—by-the-bye, old man, what between bee-hunting, and buffalo humps, and certain other matters, I have been too busy to ask your name, for I intend to begin with my rear-guard, well knowing that my man in front is too busy to answer."

"Lord, lad, I've been called in my time by as many names as there are people among whom I've dwelt. Now, the Delawares nam'd me for my eyes, and I was called after the far-sighted hawk. Then, ag'in, the settlers in the Otsego hills christened me anew from the fashion of my leggings; and various have been the names by which I have gone through life; but little will it matter, when the time shall come that all are to be mustered, face to face, by what titles a mortal has play'd his part! I humbly trust I shall be able to answer

to any of mine in a loud and manly voice."

Paul paid little or no attention to this reply, more than half of which was lost in the distance; but pursuing the humour of the moment, he called out in a stentorian voice to the naturalist to answer to his name. Dr. Battius had not thought it necessary to push his success beyond the comfortable niche which accident had so opportunely formed for his protection, and in which he now reposed from his labours with a pleasing consciousness of security, added to great exultation at the possession of the botanical treasure already mentioned.

"Mount, mount, my worthy mole-catcher! come and behold the prospect of skirting Ishmael; come and look nature boldly in the face, and not go sneaking any longer among the prairie grass and mullein tops, like a gobbler nibbling for grasshoppers."

The mouth of the light-hearted and

reckless bee-hunter was instantly closed, and he was rendered as mute as he had just been boisterous and talkative, by the appearance of Ellen Wade. When the melancholy maiden took her seat on the point of the rock, as mentioned, Paul affected to employ himself in conducting a close inspection of the household effects of the squatter. He rummaged the drawers of Esther with no delicate hands, scattered the rustic finery of her girls on the ground, without the least deference to its quality or elegance, and tossed her pots and kettles here and there, as though they had been vessels of wood instead of iron. All this industry was, however, manifestly without an object. He reserved nothing for himself, not even appearing to be conscious of the nature of the articles which suffered by his familiarity. When he had examined the inside of every cabin, taken a fresh survey of the spot where he had confined the children, and where

he had thoroughly secured them with cords, and kicked one of the pails of the woman, like a foot-ball, fifty feet into the air, in sheer wantonness, he returned to the edge of the rock, and thrusting both his hands through his wampum belt, he began to whistle the "Kentucky Hunters," as diligently as if he had been hired to supply his auditors with music by the hour. In this manner passed the remainder of the time, until Middleton, as has been related, led Inez forth from the tent, and gave a new direction to the thoughts of the whole party. He summoned Paul from his flourish of music, tore the Doctor from the study of his plant, and, as acknowledged leader, gave the necessary orders for their immediate departure.

In the bustle and confusion that was likely to succeed such a mandate, there was little opportunity to indulge in complaints or reflections. As the adventurers had not come unprepared for

victory, each individual employed himself in such offices as were best adapted to his strength and situation. The trapper had already made himself master of the patient Asinus, who was quietly feeding at no great distance from the rock, and he was now busy in fitting his back with the complicated machinery that Dr. Battius saw fit to term a saddle of his own invention. The naturalist himself seized upon his portfolios, herbals, and collection of insects, which he quickly transferred from the encampment of the squatter, to certain pockets in the aforesaid ingenious invention, and which the trapper as uniformly cast away the moment his back was turned. Paul shewed his dexterity in removing such light articles as Inez and Ellen had prepared for their flight to the foot of the citadel; while Middleton, after mingling threats and promises in order to induce the children to remain quietly in their bondage, assisted the females to

descend. As time began to press upon them, and there was great danger of Ishmael's returning, these several movements were made with singular industry and dispatch.

The trapper bestowed such articles as he conceived were necessary to the comfort of the weaker and more delicate members of the party, in those pockets from which he had so unceremoniously expelled the treasures of the unconscious naturalist; and then gave way for Middleton to place Inez in one of those seats, which he had prepared on the back of the animal for her and her companion.

"Go, child," the old man said, motioning to Ellen to follow the example of the lady, and turning his head a little anxiously, to examine the waste behind him. "It cannot be long afore the owner of this place will be coming to look after his household; and he is not

a man to give up his property, however obtained, without complaint!"

"It is true," cried Middleton; "we have wasted moments that are precious, and have the utmost need of all our industry."

"Ay, ay, I thought it; and would have said it, captain; but I remembered how your grand'ther used to love to look upon the face of her he led away for a wife, in the days of his youth and his happiness. 'Tis natur', 'tis natur', and 'tis wiser to give way a little before its feelings, than to try to stop a current that will have its course."

Ellen advanced to the side of the beast, and seizing Inez by the hand, she said, with heartfelt warmth, after struggling to suppress an emotion that nearly choked her—

"God bless you, sweet lady! I hope you will forget and forgive the wrongs you have received from my uncle—"

The humbled and sorrowful girl could say no more, her voice becoming entirely inaudible in an ungovernable burst of grief.

"How is this?" cried Middleton; "did you not say, Inez, that this excellent young woman was to accompany us, and to live with us for the remainder of her life; or, at least, until she found some more agreeable residence for herself?"

"I did; and I still hope it. She has always given me reason to believe, that after having shown so much commiseration and friendship in my misery, she would not desert me, should happier times return."

"I cannot—I ought not," continued Ellen, getting the better of her momentary weakness. "It has pleased God to cast my lot among these people, and I ought not to quit them. It would be adding the appearance of treachery to what will already seem bad enough, with

one of his opinions. He has been kind to me, an orphan, after his rough customs, and I cannot steal from him at such a moment."

"She is just as much a relation of skirting Ishmael, as I am a bishop!" said Paul, with a loud hem, as if his throat wanted clearing. "If the old fellow has done the honest thing by her, in giving her a morsel of venison, now and then, or a spoon around his homminy dish, hasn't she paid him in teaching the young devils to read their Bible, or in helping old Esther to put her finery in some shape and fashion. Tell me that a drone has a sting, and I'll believe you as easily as I will that this young woman is a debtor to any of the tribe of Bush!"

"It is but little matter who owns me, or where I am in debt. There are none to care for a girl who is fatherless and motherless, and whose nearest kin are the offcasts of all honest people. No,

no; go, lady, and Heaven for ever bless you! I am better here, in this desert, where there are none to know my shame."

"Now, old trapper," retorted Paul, "this is what I call knowing which way the wind blows! You are a man that has seen life, and you know something of fashions: I put it to your judgment, plainly, isn't it in the nature of things for the hive to swarm when the young get their growth; and if children will quit their parents, ought one who is of no kith nor kin—"

"Hist!" interrupted the man he addressed, "Hector is discontented. Say it out, plainly, pup; what is it, dog—what is it?"

The venerable hound had risen, and was scenting the fresh breeze which continued to sweep heavily over the prairie. At the words of his master he growled and contracted the muscles of

his lips, as if half disposed to threaten with the remnants of his teeth. The younger dog, who was resting after the chase of the morning, also made some signs that his nose detected a taint in the air, and then the two resumed their slumbers, as though they had done enough.

The trapper seized the bridle of the ass, and cried as he urged the beast onward—

"There is no time for words. The squatter and his brood are within a mile or two of this blessed spot."

Middleton lost all recollection of Ellen, in the danger which now so imminently beset his recovered bride again, nor is it necessary to add that Dr. Battius did not wait for a second admonition to commence his retreat.

Following the route indicated by the old man, they turned the rock in a body, and pursued their way as fast as pos-

sible across the prairie, under the favour of the cover the height afforded.

Paul Hover, however, remained in his tracks, sullenly leaning on his rifle. Near a minute had elapsed before he was observed by Ellen, who had buried her face in her hands, as if to conceal her fancied desolation from herself.

"Why do you not fly?" the weeping girl exclaimed, the instant she perceived that she was not alone.

"I'm not used to it."

"My uncle will soon be here! you have nothing to hope from his pity."

"Nor from that of his niece, I reckon. Let him come; he can only knock me on the head."

"Paul, Paul, if you love me, fly!"

"Alone!—if I do, may I be—"

"If you value your life, fly!"

"I value it not, compared to you."

"Paul!"

"Ellen!"

She extended both her hands, and burst into another and a still more violent flood of tears. The bee-hunter put one of his sturdy arms around her thin waist, and in another moment he was urging her over the plain, in rapid pursuit of their flying friends.

CHAPTER VI.

Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight
With a new Gorgon :—Do not bid me speak ;
See, and then speak yourselves.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE little run which supplied the family of the squatter with water, and had nourished the trees and bushes that had grown near the base of the rocky eminence, took its rise at no great distance from the latter, in a small thicket of cotton-wood and vines. Hither, then, the trapper directed the flight, as to the place affording the only available cover in so pressing an emergency. It will be remembered, that the sagacity of the old man, which, from long practice in similar scenes, amounted nearly to

an instinct in all cases of sudden danger, had first induced him to take this course, as it placed the hill between them and the approaching party of their enemies. Favoured by this circumstance, he succeeded in reaching the bushes in sufficient time, and Paul Hover had just hurried the breathless Ellen into the tangled brush, as Ishmael gained the summit of the rock, in the manner already described, where he stood like a man momentarily bereft of his senses, gazing at the confusion which had been created among his chattels, or at his gagged and bound children, who had been safely bestowed by the forethought of the bee-hunter under the cover of a bark roof, in a sort of irregular pile. A long rifle would have thrown a bullet from the height on which the squatter now stood, into the very cover where the fugitives, who had wrought all this mischief, were clustered.

The trapper was the first to speak, as

the man on whose intelligence and experience they all depended for counsel, after running his eye over the different individuals who gathered about him, in order to see that none were missing.

"Ah! natur' is natur', and has done its work!" he said, nodding to the exulting Paul, with a smile of approbation. "I thought it would be hard for those who had so often met in fair and foul, by star-light and under the clouded moon, to part at last in anger. Now is there little time to lose in talk, and every thing to gain by industry! It cannot be long afore some of yonder brood will be nosing along the 'arth for our trail, and should they find it, as find it they surely will, and should they push us to stand on our courage, the dispute must be settled with the rifle; which may He in Heaven forbid! Captain, can you lead us to the place where any of your warriors lie?—For the stout sons of the squatter will make a manly

brush of it, or I am but little of a judge in warlike dispositions!"

"The place of rendezvous is many leagues from this, on the banks of La Platte."

"It is bad—it is bad. If fighting is to be done, it is always wise to enter on it on equal terms. But what has one so near his time to do with ill-blood and hot-blood at his heart! Listen to what a grey head and some experience have to offer, and then if any among you can point out a wiser fashion for a retreat, we can just follow his design, and forget that I have spoken. This thicket stretches for near a mile, as it may be slanting, from the rock, and leads towards the sunset instead of the settlements."

"Enough, enough," cried Middleton, too impatient to wait until the deliberative, and perhaps loquacious, old man could end his minute explanation. "Time is too precious for words. Let us fly."

The trapper made a gesture of compliance, and turning in his tracks, he led Asinus across the trembling earth of the swale, and quickly emerged on the hard ground, on the side opposite to the encampment of the squatter.

"If old Ishmael gets a squint at that highway through the brush," cried Paul, casting, as he left the place, a hasty glance at the broad trail the party had made through the thicket, "he'll need no finger-board to tell him which way his road lies. But let him follow! I know the vagabond would gladly cross his breed with a little honest blood, but if any son of his ever gets to be the husband of—"

"Hush, Paul, hush," said the blushing and terrified young woman, who leaned on his arm for support; "your voice might be heard."

The bee-hunter was silent, though he did not cease to cast certain ominous looks behind him, as they flew along

the edge of the run, which sufficiently betrayed the belligerent condition of his mind. As each one was busy for himself, but a few minutes elapsed before the party rose a swell of the prairie, and descending without a moment's delay on the opposite side, they were at once removed from every danger of being seen by the sons of Ishmael, unless the pursuers should happen to fall upon their trail. The old man now profited by the formation of the land to take another direction, with a view to elude pursuit, as a vessel changes her course in fogs and darkness, to escape from the vigilance of her enemies.

Two hours, passed in the utmost diligence, had enabled them to make a half circuit around the rock, and to reach a point that was exactly opposite to the original direction of their flight. To most of the fugitives their situation was as entirely unknown as is that of a ship in the middle of the ocean to the

uninstructed voyager; but the old man proceeded at every turn and through every bottom, with a decision that inspired his followers with confidence, as it spoke favourably of his own knowledge of the localities. His hound, stopping now and then, to catch the expression of his eye, had preceded the trapper throughout the whole distance, with as much certainty as though a previous and intelligible communion between them had established the route by which they were to proceed. But at the expiration of the time just named, the dog suddenly came to a stand, and then seating himself on the prairie, he snuffed the air a moment, and began a low and piteous whining.

"Ay—pup—ay. I know the spot—I know the spot, and reason there is to remember it well!" said the old man, stopping by the side of his uneasy associate, until those who followed had time to come up. "Now, yonder is a thicket

before us," he continued, pointing forward, "where we may lie till tall trees grow on these naked fields, afore any of the squatter's kin will venture to molest us."

"This is the spot where the body of the dead man lay!" cried Middleton, examining the place, with an eye that revolted at the recollection.

"The very same. But whether his friends have put him in the bosom of the ground or not, remains to be seen. The hound knows the scent, but seems to be a little at a loss, too. It is therefore necessary that you advance, friend bee-hunter, to examine, while I tarry to keep the dogs from complaining in too loud a voice."

"I!" exclaimed Paul, thrusting his hand into his shaggy locks, like one who thought it prudent to hesitate before he undertook so formidable an adventure; "Now, heark'ee, old trapper; I've stood in my thinnest cottons, in the midst of

many a swarm that has lost its queen-bee, without winking, and let me tell you, the man who can do that, is not likely to fear any living son of skirting Ishmael; but as to meddling with dead men's bones, why it is neither my calling nor my inclination; so, after thanking you for the favour of your choice, as they say, when they make a man a corporal in the Kentucky militia, I decline serving.

The old man turned a disappointed look towards Middleton, who was too much occupied in solacing Inez to observe his embarrassment, which was, however, suddenly relieved from a quarter, whence, from previous circumstances, there was little reason to expect such a demonstration of fortitude.

Dr. Battius had rendered himself a little remarkable throughout the whole of the preceding retreat, for the exceeding diligence with which he had laboured to effect that desirable object.

So very conspicuous was his zeal, indeed, as to have entirely gotten the better of all his ordinary predilections. The worthy naturalist belonged to that species of discoverers, who make the worst possible travelling-companions to a man who has reason to be in a hurry. No stone, no bush, no plant, is ever suffered to escape the examination of their vigilant eyes: and thunder may mutter and rain fall, without disturbing the pleasing abstraction of their reveries. Not so, however, with the disciple of Linnæus, during the momentous period that it remained a mooted point at the tribunal of his better judgment, whether the stout descendants of the squatter were not likely to dispute his right to traverse the prairie in freedom. The highest blooded and best trained hound, with his game in view, could not have run with an eye more rivetted than that with which the Doctor had pursued his curvilinear course. It was, perhaps,

lucky for his fortitude that he was ignorant of the artifice of the trapper in leading them around the citadel of Ishmael, and that he had imbibed the soothing impression that every inch of prairie he traversed was just so much added to the distance between his own person and the detested rock. Notwithstanding the momentary shock he certainly experienced when he discovered this error, he was the man who now so boldly volunteered to enter the thicket, in which there was some reason to believe the body of the murdered Asa still lay. Perhaps the naturalist was urged to show his spirit, on this occasion, by some secret consciousness that his excessive industry in the retreat might be liable to misconstruction; and it is certain that, whatever might be his peculiar notions of danger from the quick, his habits and his knowledge had placed him far above the apprehension

of suffering harm from any communication with the dead.

"If there is any service to be performed which requires the perfect command of the nervous system," said the man of science, with a look that was slightly blustering, "you have only to give a direction to his intellectual faculties, and here stands one on whose physical powers you may depend."

"The man is given to speak in parables," muttered the single-minded trapper; "but I conclude there is always some meaning hidden in his words: though it is as hard to find sense in his speeches, as to discover three eagles on the same tree. It will be wise, friend, to make a cover, lest the sons of the squatter should be out skirting on our trail: and as you well know there is some reason to fear yonder thicket contains a sight that may horrify a woman's mind, are you man enough to look

death in the face; or shall I run the risk of the hounds raising an outcry, and go in myself? You see the pup is willing to run with an open mouth already."

"Am I man enough! Venerable trapper, our communications have a recent origin, or thy interrogatory might have a tendency to embroil us in an angry disputation. Am I man enough! I claim to be of the *class*, mammalia; *order*, primates; *genus*, homo! Such are my physical attributes; of my moral properties, let posterity speak; it becomes me to be mute."

"Physic may do for such as relish it; to my taste and judgment, it is neither palatable nor healthy; but morals never did harm to any living mortal, be it that he was a sojourner in the forest, or a dweller in the midst of glazed windows and smoking chimneys. It is only a few hard words that divide us, friend, for I am of an opinion that, with use and freedom, we should come to understand

one another, and mainly settle down into the same judgments of mankind, and of the ways of the world. Quiet, Hector, quiet; what ruffles your temper, pup; is it not used to the scent of human blood?"

The Doctor bestowed a gracious but commiserating smile on the philosopher of nature, as he retrograded a step or two from the place whither he had been impelled by his excess of spirit, in order to reply with less expenditure of breath, and with a greater freedom of action and attitude.

"A homo is certainly a homo," he said, stretching forth an arm, in an imposing and argumentative manner. "So far as the animal functions extend, there are the connecting links of harmony, order, conformity, and design, between the whole genus; but there the resemblance ends. Man may be degraded to the very margin of the line which separates him from the brute, by ignorance;

or he may be elevated to a communion with the great Master-Spirit of all, by knowledge; nay, I know not, if time and opportunity were given him, but he might become the master of all learning, and, consequently, equal to the great moving principle."

The old man, who stood leaning on his rifle, in a thoughtful attitude, shook his head, as he answered, with a native steadiness, that entirely eclipsed the imposing air which his antagonist had seen fit to assume—

"This is neither more nor less than mortal wickedness! Here have I been a dweller on the 'arth for fourscore and six changes of the seasons, and all that time have I look'd at the growing and the dying trees, and yet do I not know the reasons why the bud starts under the summer sun, or the leaf falls when it is pinch'd by the frosts. Your l'arning, though it is man's boast, is folly in the

eyes of Him who sits in the clouds, and looks down, in sorrow, at the pride and vanity of his creatur's. Many is the hour that I've passed, lying in the shades of the woods, or stretch'd upon the hills of these open fields, looking up into the blue skies, where I could fancy the Great One had taken his stand, and was solemnizing on the waywardness of man and brute, below; as I myself had often look'd at the ants tumbling over each other in their eagerness, though in a way and a fashion more suited to His mightiness and power. Knowledge! It is His plaything. Say, you who think it so easy to climb into the judgment-seat above, can you tell me any thing of the beginning and the end? Nay, you're a dealer in ailings and cures: what is life, and what is death? Why does the eagle live so long, and why is the time of the butterfly so short? Tell me a simpler thing: why is this hound so uneasy,

while you, who have passed your days in looking into books, can see no reason to be disturbed?"

The Doctor, who had been a little astounded by the dignity and energy of the old man, drew a long breath, like a sullen wrestler who is just released from the throttling grasp of his antagonist, and seized on the opportunity of the pause to reply—

"It is his instinct."

"And what is the gift of instinct?"

"An inferior gradation of reason. A sort of mysterious combination of thought and matter."

"And what is that which you call thought?"

"Venerable venator, this is a method of reasoning which sets at nought the uses of definitions, and such as I do assure you is not at all tolerated in the schools."

"Then is there more cunning in your schools than I had thought: for it is a

certain method of showing them their vanity," returned the trapper, suddenly abandoning a discussion, from which the naturalist was just beginning to anticipate great delight, by turning to his dog, whose restlessness he attempted to appease by playing with his ears. "This is foolish, Hector; more like an untrained pup than a sensible hound; one who has got his education by hard experience, and not by nosing over the trails of other dogs, as a boy in the settlements follows on the track of his masters, be it right, or be it wrong. Well, friend; you who can do so much, are you equal to looking into the thicket, or must I go in myself?"

The Doctor again assumed his air of resolution, and, without further parlance, proceeded to do as desired. The dogs were so far restrained by the remonstrances of the old man, as to confine their complaints to low, but often repeated whinings. When they saw the

naturalist advance, the pup, however, broke through all restraint, and made a swift circuit around his person, scenting the earth as he proceeded: and then, returning to his companion, he howled aloud.

"The squatter and his brood have left a strong taint upon the 'arth," said the old man, watching as he spoke for some signal from his learned pioneer to follow; "I hope yonder school-bred man knows enough to remember the errand on which I have sent him."

Doctor Battius had already disappeared in the bushes, and the trapper was beginning to betray additional evidences of impatience, when the person of the former was seen retiring from the thicket backwards, with his face fastened on the place he had just left, as though his look was bound in the thraldom of some charm.

"Here is something skeary, by the

wildness of the man's countenance!" exclaimed the old man, relinquishing his hold of Hector, and moving stoutly to the side of the totally unconscious naturalist. "How is it, friend; have you found a new leaf in your book of wisdom?"

"It is a basilisk!" muttered the Doctor, whose altered visage betrayed the utter confusion which had beset his faculties. "An animal of the *order*, serpens. I had thought its attributes were fabulous, but mighty nature is equal to all that man can imagine!"

"What is't? what is't? The snakes of the prairies are harmless, unless it be now and then an angered rattler, and he always gives you notice with his tail, afore he works his mischief with his fangs. Lord, Lord, what a humbling thing is fear! Here is one, who in common delivers words too big for a humble mouth to hold, so much beside himself,

that his voice is as fine as the whistle of the whip-poor-will! Courage! what is it, man? what is it?"

"A prodigy! a lusus naturæ! a monster, that nature has delighted to form in order to exhibit her power! Never before have I witnessed such an utter confusion in her laws, or a specimen that so completely bids defiance to the distinctions of *class* and *genera*. Let me record its appearance," fumbling for his tablets, with hands that trembled too much to perform their office, "while time and opportunity are allowed—*eyes*, enthralling; *colour*, various, complex, and profound—"

"One would think the man was craz'd, with his enthralling looks and pieball'd colours!" interrupted the discontented trapper, who began to grow a little uneasy that his party was all this time neglecting to seek the protection of some cover. "If there is a reptile in the bush, show me the creatur', and should it

refuse to depart peaceably, why there must be a quarrel for the possession of the place."

"There!" said the Doctor, pointing into a dense mass of the thicket, to a spot within fifty feet of where they both stood. The trapper turned his look, with perfect composure, in the required direction; but the instant his keen and practised glance met the object which had so utterly upset the philosophy of the naturalist, he gave a start himself, and threw his rifle rapidly forward, and as instantly recovered it, as though a second flash of thought convinced him he was wrong. Neither the instinctive movement nor the sudden recollection was without a sufficient object. At the very margin of the thicket, and in absolute contact with the earth, lay an animate ball, that might easily, by the singularity and fierceness of its aspect, have justified the disturbed condition of the naturalist's mind. It were difficult

to describe the shape or colours of this extraordinary substance, except to say, in general terms, that it was nearly spherical, and exhibited all the hues of the rainbow, intermingled without reference to harmony, and without any very ostensible design. The predominant hues were a black and a bright vermilion. With these, however, the several tints of white, yellow, and crimson, were strangely and wildly blended. Had this been all, it would have been difficult to have pronounced that the object was possessed of life, for it lay as motionless as any stone; but a pair of dark, glaring, and moving eye-balls, which watched with jealousy the smallest movements of the trapper and his companion, sufficiently established the important fact of its possessing vitality.

"Your reptile is a scouter, or I'm no judge of Indian paints and Indian deviltries!" muttered the old man, dropping the butt of his weapon to the ground,

and gazing with a steady eye at the frightful object, as he leaned on its barrel, in an attitude of great composure. "He wants to face us out of sight and reason, and make us think the head of a red-skin is a stone covered with the autumn leaf; or he has some other devilish artifice in his mind!"

"Is the animal human?" demanded the Doctor, "of the *genus*, homo! I had fancied it a non-descript."

"It's as human, and as mortal, too, as a warrior of these prairies is ever known to be. I have seen the time when a red-skin would have shewn a foolish daring, to peep out of his ambushment in that fashion on a hunter I could name; but who is too old now, and too near his time, to be any thing better than a miserable trapper. It will be well to speak to the imp, and to let him know he deals with men whose beards are grown. Come forth from your cover, friend," he continued, in the language

of the extensive tribes of the Dahcotahs; "there is room on the prairie for another warrior."

The eyes appeared to glare more fiercely than before, but the mass which, according to the trapper's opinion, was neither more nor less than a human head, shorn, as usual among the warriors of the west, of its hair, still continued without motion or any other sign of life.

"It is a mistake!" exclaimed the Doctor. "The animal is not even of the *class*, mammalia; much less a man."

"So much for your knowledge!" returned the trapper, laughing with great inward exultation. "So much for the l'arning of one who has look'd into so many books, that his eyes are not able to tell a moose from a wild cat. Now, my Hector, here, is a dog of education after his fashion: and, though the meanest primmer in the settlements would puzzle his schooling, you could

not cheat the hound in a matter like this. As you think the object an't a man, you shall see his whole formation, and then let an ignorant old trapper, who never pass'd a day within reach of a spelling-book in his life, know by what name to call it. Mind, I mean no violence; but just to brush the devil from his ambushment."

The trapper now very deliberately examined the priming of his rifle, taking care to make as great a parade as possible of his hostile intentions, in going through the necessary evolutions with the weapon. When he thought the stranger began seriously to apprehend some danger, he very deliberately presented the piece, and called aloud—

"Now, friend, am I all for peace, or all for war, as you may say. No! well, it *is* no man, as the wise one here says, and there can be no harm in just firing into a bunch of leaves."

The muzzle of the rifle fell as he con-

cluded, and the weapon was gradually settling into a steady, and what would easily have proved a fatal aim, when a tall Indian sprang from beneath that bed of leaves and brush, which he had probably collected about his person at the approach of the party, and stood upright, uttering the sententious exclamation,

"Wagh!"

CHAPTER VII.

My visor is Philemon's roof; within the house
Is Jove's.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE trapper, who had meditated no violence, dropped his rifle again, and laughing at the success of his experiment, with great seeming self-complacency, he drew the astounded gaze of the naturalist from the person of the savage to himself, by saying—

"The imps will lie for hours, like sleeping alligators, brooding their deviltries in dreams and other craftiness, until such time as they see some real danger is at hand, and then they look to themselves the same as other mortals.

But this is a scouter in his war-paint! There should be more of his tribe at no great distance. Let us draw the truth out of him; for an unlucky war-party may prove more dangerous to us than a visit from the whole family of the squatter."

"It is truly a desperate and dangerous species!" said the Doctor, relieving his amazement by a breath that seemed to exhaust his lungs of air; "a violent race, and one that it is difficult to define or class within the usual boundaries of definitions. Speak to him, therefore; but let thy words be strong in amity."

The old man cast a keen eye on every side of him, to ascertain the important particular whether the stranger was supported by any associates: and then making the usual signs of peace, by exhibiting the palm of his naked hand, he boldly advanced. In the mean time, the Indian had betrayed no evidence of uneasiness. He suffered the trapper to draw nigh,

maintaining by his own mien and attitude a striking air of dignity and fearlessness. Perhaps the wary warrior also knew that, owing to the difference in their weapons, he should be placed more on an equality, by being brought nearer to the strangers. As a description of this individual may furnish some idea of the personal appearance of a whole race, it may be well to detain the narrative, in order to present it to the reader, in our hasty and imperfect manner. Would the truant eyes of Alston or Leslie turn, but for a time, from their gaze at the models of antiquity, to contemplate this wronged and humble people, little would be left for such inferior artists as ourselves to delineate.

The Indian in question was in every particular a warrior of fine stature and admirable proportions. As he cast aside his mask, composed of such party-coloured leaves, as he had hurriedly collected, his countenance appeared in

all the gravity, the dignity, and, it may be added, in the terror of his profession. The outlines of his lineaments were strikingly noble, and nearly approaching to Roman, though the secondary features of his face were slightly marked with the well-known traces of his Asiatic origin. The peculiar tint of the skin, which in itself is so well designed to aid the effect of a martial expression, had received an additional aspect of wild ferocity from the colours of the war-paint. But, as though he disdained the usual artifices of his people, he bore none of those strange and horrid devices, with which the children of the forest are accustomed, like the more civilized heroes of the mustache, to back their reputation for courage, contenting himself with a broad and deep shadowing of black, that served as a sufficient and an admirable foil to the brighter gleamings of his native swarthiness. His head was, as usual, shaved to the crown, where a large and

gallant scalp-lock seemed fearlessly to challenge the grasp of his enemies. The ornaments that in peace were pendant from the cartilages of his ears had been removed, on account of his present pursuit. His body, notwithstanding the lateness of the season, was nearly naked, and the portion that was clad bore a vestment no warmer than a light robe of the finest dressed deer-skin, beautifully stained with the rude design of some daring exploit, and which was carelessly worn, as if more in pride than from any unmanly regard to comfort. His leggings were of bright scarlet cloth, the only evidence about his person that he had held communion with the traders of the Pale-faces. But, as if to furnish some offset to this solitary submission to a womanish vanity, they were fearfully fringed, from the gartered knee to the bottom of the moccasin, with the hair of human scalps. He leaned lightly with one hand on a short hickory bow, while

the other rather touched than sought support from the long, delicate handle of an ashen lance. A quiver made of the cougar skin, from which the tail of the animal depended, as a characteristic ornament, was slung at his back, and a shield of hides, quaintly emblazoned with another of his warlike deeds, was suspended from his neck by a thong of sinews.

As the trapper approached, this warrior maintained his calm, upright attitude, discovering neither an eagerness to ascertain the character of those who advanced upon him, nor the smallest wish to avoid a scrutiny in his own person. An eye, that was darker and more shining than that of the stag, was incessantly glancing, however, from one to another of the stranger party, seemingly never knowing rest for an instant.

"Is my brother far from his village?" demanded the old man, in the Pawnee language, after examining the paint, and

those other little signs by which a practised eye knows the tribe of the warrior he encounters in the American deserts, with the same readiness, and by the same sort of mysterious observation, as that by which the seaman knows the distant sail.

"It is farther to the towns of the Big-knives," was the laconic reply.

"Why is a Pawnee-Loup so far from the fork of his own river, without a horse to journey on, and in a spot so empty as this?"

"Can the women and children of a Pale-face live without the meat of the bison! There was hunger in my lodge!"

"My brother is very young to be already the master of a lodge," returned the trapper, looking steadily into the unmoved countenance of the youthful warrior; "but I dare say he is brave, and that many a chief has offered him his daughters for wives. But has he

not forgotten himself," pointing to the arrow, which was dangling from the hand that held the bow, " in bringing a loose and barbed arrow-head to kill the buffalo? Do the Pawnees wish the wounds they give their game to rankle?"

" It is good for the Sioux. Though he is not in sight, a bush may hide him."

" The man is a living proof of the truth of his words," muttered the trapper in English, " and a close-jointed and gallant looking lad he is; but far too young for a chief of any importance. It is wise, however, to speak him fair, for a single arm thrown into either party, if we come to blows with the squatter and his brood, may turn the day.—You see my children are weary," he continued in the dialect of the prairies, pointing, as he spoke, to the rest of the party, who, by this time, were also approaching. " We wish to 'camp and eat. Does my brother own this spot?"

" The runners, from the people on

the Big-river, tell us that your nation have traded with the Tawney-faces who live beyond the salt lake, and that the prairies are now the hunting grounds of the Big-knives!"

"It is true, as I hear, also, from the hunters and trappers on La Platte: though it is with the Frenchers, and not with the men who claim to own the Mexicos, that my people have bargained."

"And warriors are wading up the Long-river, to see that they have not been cheated in what they have bought?"

"Ay, that is partly true, too, I fear; and it will not be long before an accursed band of choppers and loggers will be following on their heels, to humble the wilderness which lies so broad and rich on the western banks of the Mississipi; and then the land will be a peopled desert, from the shores of the main sea to the foot of the Rocky Mountains; fill'd with all the abomina-

tions and crafts of man, and stript of the comfort and loveliness it received from the hands of the Lord!"

"And where were the chiefs of the Pawnee-Loups, when this bargain was made?" suddenly demanded the youthful warrior, a look of startling fierceness gleaming, at the same instant, athwart his dark visage. "Is a nation to be sold like the skin of a beaver!"

"Right enough—right enough; and where were truth and honesty, also? But might is right, according to the fashions of the 'arth; and what the strong choose to do, the weak must call justice. If the law of the Wahcondah was as much hearkened to, Pawnee, as the laws of the Long-knives, your right to the prairies would be as good as that of the greatest chief in the settlements to the house which covers his head."

"The skin of the traveller is white," said the young native, laying a finger impressively on the hard and wrinkled

hand of the trapper. "Does his heart say one thing, and his tongue another?"

"The Wahcondah of a white man has ears, and he shuts them to a lie. Look at my head; it is like a frosted pine, and must soon be laid in the ground. Why then should I wish to meet the Great Spirit, face to face, while his countenance is dark upon me?"

The Pawnee gracefully threw his shield over one shoulder, and placing a hand on his chest, he bent his head, in deference to the grey locks exhibited by the trapper; after which his eye became more steady, and his countenance less fierce. Still he maintained every appearance of a distrust and watchfulness that were rather tempered and subdued, than forgotten. When this equivocal species of amity was established between the warrior of the prairies and the experienced old trapper, the latter proceeded to give his direction to Paul, concerning the arrangements of

the contemplated halt. While Inez and Ellen were dismounting, and Middleton and the bee-hunter were attending to their comforts, the discourse was continued, sometimes in the language of the natives, but often, as Paul and the Doctor mingled their opinions with the two principal speakers, in the English tongue. There was a keen and subtle trial of skill between the Pawnee and the trapper, in which each endeavoured to discover the objects of the other, without betraying his interest in the investigation. As might be expected, when the struggle was between adversaries so equal, the result of the encounter answered the expectations of neither. The latter had put all the interrogatories his ingenuity and practice could suggest, concerning the state of the tribe of the Loups, their crops, their store of provisions for the ensuing winter, and their relations with their different warlike neighbours, without extorting any an-

swer that in the slightest degree eluci-dated the reason why he found a solitary warrior so far from his people. On the other hand, while the questions of the Indian were far more dignified and deli-cate, they were equally ingenious. He commented on the state of the trade in peltries, spoke of the good or ill success of many white hunters, whom he had either encountered or heard named, and even alluded to the steady march, which the nation of his great father, as he cautiously termed the government of the States, was making towards the hunting-grounds of his tribe. It was apparent, however, by the singular mixture of interest, contempt, and indig-nation, that were occasionally gleaming through the reserved manners of this warrior, that he knew the strange people who were thus trespassing on his native rights much more by report than by any actual intercourse. This personal ignorance of the whites was as much

betrayed by the manner in which he regarded the females, as by any of the brief but energetic expressions which occasionally escaped him.

While speaking to the trapper, he suffered his wandering glances to stray towards the intellectual and nearly infantile beauty of Inez, as one might be supposed to gaze upon the loveliness of an ethereal being. It was very evident that he now saw, for the first time, one of those females, of whom the fathers of his tribe so often spoke, and who were considered of such rare excellence, as to equal all that savage ingenuity could imagine in the way of loveliness. His observation of Ellen was less marked, but notwithstanding the warlike and chastened expression of his eye, there was much of the homage which man is wont to pay to woman, even in the more cursory look he sometimes turned on her maturer, and perhaps more animated beauty. This admiration, how-

ever, was so tempered by his habits, and so smothered in the pride of a warrior, as completely to elude every eye, but that of the trapper, who was too well skilled in Indian customs, and was too well instructed in the importance of rightly conceiving the character of the stranger, to let the smallest trait, or the most trifling of his movements, escape him. In the mean time, the unconscious Ellen herself, moved about the feeble and less resolute Inez, with her accustomed assiduity and tenderness, exhibiting in her frank features, those changing emotions of joy and regret which occasionally beset her, as her active mind dwelt on the decided step she had just taken, with the contending doubts and hopes, and possibly with some of the mental vacillation that was natural to her situation and sex.

Not so Paul; conceiving himself to have obtained the two things dearest to

his heart, the possession of Ellen, and a triumph over the sons of Ishmael, he now enacted his part, in the business of the moment, with as much coolness as though he were already leading his willing bride, from solemnizing their nuptials before a border magistrate, to the security of his own dwelling. He had hovered around the moving family, during the tedious period of their weary march, concealing himself by day, and seeking interviews with his betrothed as opportunities offered, in the manner already described, until fortune and his own intrepidity had united to render him successful, at the very moment when he was beginning to despair. He now cared neither for distance, nor violence, nor hardships. To his sanguine fancy and determined resolution all the rest was easily to be achieved. Such were his feelings, and such in truth they seemed to be, as, with his cap cast on one side, and whistling a low air, he thrashed

among the bushes, in order to make a place suitable for the females to repose on, while, from time to time, he cast an approving glance at the agile and rounded form of Ellen, as she tripped past him in the pursuit of her own share of the duty.

"And so the Wolf-tribe of the Pawnees have buried the hatchet with their neighbours the Konzas," said the trapper, pursuing a discourse, which he had scarcely permitted to flag, though it had been occasionally interrupted by the different directions, with which he occasionally saw fit to interrupt it—the reader will remember, that while he spoke to the native warrior in his own tongue, he necessarily addressed his white companions in English. "The Loups and the light-fac'd Red-skins are again friends. Doctor, that is a tribe of which I'll engage you've often read, and of which many a round lie has been whispered

in the ears of the ignorant people, who live in the settlements. There was a story of a nation of Welshers, that liv'd hereaway in the prairies, and how they came into the land afore the uneasy-minded man, who first let in the Christians to rob the heathens of their inheritance, had ever dreamt that the sun set on a country as big as that it rose from; and how they knew the white ways, and spoke with white tongues, and a thousand other follies and idle conceits."

"Have I not heard of them!" exclaimed the naturalist, dropping a piece of jerked bison's meat, which he was rather roughly discussing at the moment. "I should be greatly ignorant, not to have often dwelt with delight on so beautiful a theory, and one which so triumphantly establishes two positions, which I have often maintained are unanswerable, even without such living testimony in their favour—viz. that this

continent can claim a more remote affinity with civilization, than the time of Columbus, and that colour is the fruit of climate and condition, and not a regulation of nature. Propound the latter question to this Indian gentleman, venerable hunter; he is of a reddish tint himself, and his opinion may be said to make us masters of the two sides of the disputed point."

"Do you think a Pawnee is a reader of books and a believer of printed lies, like the idlers in the towns?" contemptuously retorted the old man. "But it may be as well to humour the likings of the man, which, after all, it is quite possible are neither more nor less than his natural gifts, and, therefore, to be followed, although they may be pitied. What does my brother think? all whom he sees here have white skins, but the Pawnee warriors are red; does he believe that man changes with the season, and that the son is not like his fathers?"

The young warrior regarded his interrogator for a moment with a steady and scornful eye, and then raising his finger upward, with a proud gesture, he answered with dignity—

"The Wahcondah pours the rain from his clouds; when he speaks, he shakes the hills; and the fire, which scorches the trees, is the anger of his eye; but he fashioned his children with care and thought. What he has thus made, never alters!"

"Ay, 'tis in the reason of natur' that it should be so, Doctor," continued the trapper, when he had interpreted this answer to the disappointed naturalist. "The Pawnees are a wise and a great people, and I'll engage they abound in many a wholesome and honest tradition. The hunters and trappers I sometimes see, speak of a great warrior of your race!"

"My tribe are not women. A brave is no stranger in my village."

"Ay; but he they speak of most, is a chief far beyond the renown of common warriors, and one that might have done credit to that once mighty, but now fallen people, the Delawares of the hills."

"Such a warrior should have a name."

"They call him Hard-Heart, from the stoutness of his resolution; and well is he named, if all I have heard of his deeds be true."

The stranger cast a glance, which seemed to read the guileless soul of the old man, as he demanded—

"Has the Pale-face seen the partisan of my tribe?"

"Never. It is not with me now, as it used to be some forty years ago, when warfare and bloodshed were my calling and my gifts!"

A loud shout from the reckless Paul interrupted his speech, and at the next moment the bee-hunter appeared, leading an Indian war-horse from the side

of the thicket opposite to the one occupied by the party.

"Here is a beast for a Red-skin to straddle!" he cried, as he made the animal go through some of its wild paces. "There's not a brigadier in all Kentucky that can call himself master of so sleek and well-jointed a nag! A Spanish saddle, too, like a grandee of the Mexico's! and look at the mane and tail, braided and platted down with little silver balls, as if it were Ellen herself getting her shining hair ready for a dance or a husking frolic! Isn't this a real trotter, old trapper, to eat out of the manger of a savage?"

"Softly, lad, softly. The Loups are famous for their horses, and it is often that you see a warrior on the prairies far better mounted than a congress man in the settlements. But this, indeed, is a beast that none but a powerful chief should ride. The saddle, as you rightly think, has been sat upon in its day by a great

Spanish captain, who has lost it and his life together, in some of the battles which this people often fight against the southern provinces. I warrant me, this youngster is the son of a great chief; may be of the mighty Hard-Heart himself."

During this rude interruption to the discourse, the young Pawnee manifested neither impatience nor displeasure; but when he thought his beast had been the subject of sufficient comment, he very coolly, and with the air of one accustomed to have his will respected, relieved Paul of the bridle, and throwing the reins on the neck of the animal, he sprang upon his back, with the activity of a professor of the equestrian art. Nothing could be finer or firmer than the seat of the savage. The highly wrought and cumbrous saddle was evidently more for show than use. Indeed it impeded rather than aided the action of limbs, which disdained to seek

assistance or admit of restraint from such womanish inventions as stirrups. The horse, which immediately began to prance, was, like its rider, wild and untutored in all his motions, but while there was so little of art, there was all the freedom and grace of nature in the movements of both. The animal was probably indebted to the blood of Araby for its excellence, through a long pedigree, that embraced the steed of Mexico, the Spanish barb, and the Moorish charger. The rider in obtaining his steed from the provinces of Central-America, had also obtained that spirit and grace in controuling him, which unite to form the most intrepid and perhaps the most skilful horseman in the world.

Notwithstanding this sudden occupation of his animal, the Pawnee discovered no hasty wish to depart. More at his ease, and possibly more independent, now he found himself secure of

the means of retreat, he rode back and forth, eying the different individuals of the party with far greater freedom than before. But at each extremity of his ride, just as the sagacious trapper expected to see him profit by his advantage and fly, he would turn his horse and pass over the same ground, sometimes with the rapidity of the flying antelope, and at others more slowly and with greater dignity of mien and movement. Anxious to ascertain such facts as might have an influence on his future proceedings, the old man determined to invite him to a renewal of their conference. He, therefore, made a gesture expressive at the same time of his wish to resume the interrupted discourse, and of his own pacific intentions. The quick eye of the stranger was not slow to note the action, but it was not until a sufficient time had passed to allow him to debate the prudence of the measure in his own mind, that he seemed willing

to trust himself again so near a party that was so much superior to himself in physical power, and consequently one that was able at any instant to command his life or controul his personal liberty. When he did approach nigh enough to converse with facility, it was with a singular mixture of haughtiness and of distrust.

"It is far to the village of the Loups," he said, stretching his arm in a direction contrary to that in which the trapper well knew that the tribe dwelt, "and the road is very crooked. What has the Big-knife to say?"

"Ay, crooked enough!" muttered the old man in English, "if you are to set out on your journey by that path; but not half so winding as the cunning of an Indian's mind. Say, my brother, do the chiefs of the Pawnees love to see strange faces in their lodges?"

The young warrior bent his body

gracefully, though but slightly, over his saddle-bow, as he replied with grave dignity—

"When have my people forgotten to give food to the stranger!"

"If I lead my daughters to the doors of the Loups, will the women take them by the hand, and will the warriors smoke with my young men?"

"The country of the Pale-faces is behind them. Why do they journey so far towards the setting sun! Have they lost the path, or are these the women of the white warriors, that I hear are wading up the river 'with the troubled waters?'"

"Neither. They who wade the Missouri, are the warriors of my great father, who has sent them on his message; but we are peace-runners. The white men and the red are neighbours, and they wish to be friends. Do not the Omahaws visit the Loups, when the toma-

hawk is buried in the path between the two nations?"

"The Omahaws are welcome."

"And the Yanktons and the burnt-wood Tetons, who live in the elbow of the 'river with muddy water,' do they not come into the lodges of the Loups and smoke?"

"The Tetons are liars!" exclaimed the other. "They dare not shut their eyes in the night. No; they sleep in the sun. See," he added, pointing with fierce triumph to the frightful ornaments of his leggings, "their scalps are so plenty, that the Pawnees tread on them! Go, let a Sioux live in banks of snow; the plains and buffalos are for men!"

"Ah! the secret is out," said the trapper to Middleton, who was an attentive, because a deeply interested observer of what was passing. "This good-looking young Indian is scouting on the track of the

Siouxes—you may see it by his arrow-heads, and his paint; ay, by his eye, too; for a Red-skin lets his natur' follow the business he is on, be it for peace or be it for war,—quiet, Hector, quiet. Have you never scented a Pawnee afore, pup—keep down, dog—keep down. My brother is right. The Siouxes are thieves. Men of all colours and nations say it of them, and say it truly. But the people from the rising sun are not Siouxes, and they wish to visit the lodges of the Loups."

"The head of my brother is white," returned the Pawnee, throwing one of those glances at the trapper, which were so remarkably expressive of distrust, intelligence, and pride, and then pointing, as he continued, towards the eastern horizon, "and his eyes have looked on many things: can he tell me the name of what he sees yonder—is it a buffalo?"

"It looks more like a cloud, peeping

above the skirt of the plain, with the sunshine lighting its edges. It is the smoke of the heavens."

"It is a hill of the earth, and on its top are the lodges of the Pale-faces. Let the women of my brother wash their feet with the people of their own colour."

"The eyes of a Pawnee are good, if he can see a white-skin so far."

The Indian turned slowly towards the speaker, and after a pause of a moment, he sternly demanded—

"Can my brother hunt?"

"Alas! I claim to be no better than a miserable trapper."

"When the plain is covered with the buffalos, can he see them?"

"No doubt, no doubt—it is far easier to see than to take a scampering bull."

"And when the birds are flying from the cold, and the clouds are black with their feathers, can he see *them*, too?"

"Ay, ay, it is not hard to find a duck

or a goose when millions are darkening the heavens."

"When the snow falls, and covers the lodges of the Long-knives, can the stranger see flakes in the air?"

"My eyes are none of the best, now," returned the old man a little resentfully; "but the time has been, Pawnee, when I had a name for my sight."

"The Red-skins find the Big-knives as easily as the stranger sees the buffalo, or the travelling birds, or the falling snow. Your warriors think the Master of Life has made the whole earth white; they are mistaken. They are pale, and it is their own faces that they see. Go! a Pawnee is not blind, that he need look long for your people!"

The warrior suddenly paused, and bent his face aside, like one who listened with all his faculties absorbed in the act. Then turning the head of his horse, he rode to the nearest angle of

the thicket, and looked intently across the bleak prairie, in a direction opposite to the side on which the party stood. Returning slowly from this unaccountable, and, to his observers, startling procedure, he rivetted his eyes on Inez, and paced back and forth several times, with the air of one who maintained a warm struggle on some difficult point, in the secret recesses of his own thoughts. He had drawn the reins of his impatient steed, and was seemingly about to speak, when his head again sunk on his chest, and he resumed his former attitude of attention. Galloping, like a deer, to the place of his former observations, he rode for a moment swiftly, in short and rapid circles, as if still uncertain of his course, and then darted away, like a bird that had been fluttering around its nest before it takes a distant flight. After scouring the plain for a minute, he was lost to the eye behind a swell of the land.

The hounds, who had also manifested great uneasiness for some time, followed him for a little distance, and then terminated their chase by seating themselves on the ground, and raising their usual low, whining, and alarming howls.

CHAPTER VIII.

How if he will not stand?
SHAKSPEARE.

THE several movements related in the close of the preceding chapter, had passed in so short a space of time, that the old man, while he neglected not to note the smallest incident, had no opportunity of expressing his opinion concerning the stranger's motives. After the Pawnee had disappeared, however, he shook his head and muttered, while he walked slowly to the angle of the thicket that the Pawnee had just quitted—

" There are both scents and sounds in

the air, though my miserable senses are not good enough to hear the one or to catch the taint of the other."

"There is nothing to be seen," cried Middleton, who kept close at his side. "My eyes and my ears are good, and yet I can assure you that I neither hear nor see any thing."

"Your eyes are good! and you are not deaf!" returned the other, with a slight air of contempt; "no, lad, no; they may be good to see across a church, or to hear a town-bell, but afore you had passed a year in these prairies you would find yourself mistaking a turkey for a horse, or conceiting, full fifty times, that the roar of a buffalo bull was the thunder of the Lord! There is a deception of natur' in these naked plains, in which the air throws up the image like water, and then is it hard to tell the prairies from a sea. But yonder is a sign that a hunter never fails to know!"

The trapper pointed to a flight of vultures that were sailing over the plain at no great distance, and apparently in the direction in which the Pawnee had rivetted his eye. At first, Middleton could not distinguish the small, dark objects that were dotting the dusky clouds, but as they came swiftly onward, first their forms, and then their heavy, waving wings, became distinctly visible.

"Listen," said the trapper, when he had succeeded in making Middleton see the moving column of birds. "Now you hear the buffalos, or bisons, as your knowing Doctor sees fit to call them, though buffalos is their name among all the hunters of these regions. Now, I conclude, that a hunter is a better judge of a beast and of its name," he added, winking to the young soldier, "than any man who has turned over the leaves of a book, instead of travelling over the face of the 'arth, in order to

find out the name and the natur's of its inhabitants."

"Of their habits, I will grant you," cried the naturalist, who rarely missed an opportunity to agitate any point which touched his favourite studies. "That is, provided always deference is had to the proper use of definitions, and that they are contemplated with scientific eyes."

"Eyes of a mole! as if man's eyes were not as good for names as the eyes of any other creatur! Who named the works of His hand? Can you tell me that, with your books and college wisdom? Was it not the first man in the Garden; and is it not a plain consequence that his children inherit his gifts!"

"That is certainly the Mosaic account of the event," said the Doctor; "though your reading is by far too literal."

"My reading! now, if you suppose that I have wasted my time in schools, you do such a wrong to my knowledge,

as one mortal should never lay to the door of another without sufficient reason. If I have ever craved the art of reading, it has been that I might better know the sayings of the book you name; for it is a book which speaks, in every line, according to human feelings, and therein according to reason."

"And do you then believe," said the Doctor, a little provoked by the dogmatism of his stubborn adversary, and perhaps, secretly, too confident in his own more liberal, though scarcely as profitable attainments—"Do you then believe that all these beasts were literally collected in a garden, to be enrolled in the nomenclature of the first man?"

"Why not? I understand your meaning; for it is not needful to live in towns to hear all the devilish devices that the conceit of man can invent to upset his own happiness. What does it prove, except, indeed, it may be said to prove that the garden He made was not after

the miserable fashions of our times, thereby directly giving the lie to what the world call its civilizing. No, no, the garden of the Lord was the forest then, and is the forest now, where the fruits do grow, and the birds do sing, according to his own wise ordering. Now, captain, you may see through the mystery of the vultures! There come the buffalos themselves, and a noble herd it is! I warrant me, that Pawnee has a troop of his people in some of the hollows nigh by; and as he has gone scampering after them, you are about to see a glorious chase. It will serve to keep the squatter and his brood under cover, and for ourselves there is little reason to fear. A Pawnee is not apt to be a malicious savage."

Every eye was now drawn to the striking spectacle that succeeded. Even the timid Inez hastened to the side of Middleton to gaze at the sight, and Paul summoned Ellen from her culinary la-

bours, to become a witness of the lively scene.

Throughout the whole of those moving events, which it has been our duty to record, the prairies had lain in the majesty of perfect solitude. The heavens had been blackened with the passage of the migratory birds, it is true, but the dogs of the party, and the ass of the Doctor, were the only quadrupeds that had enlivened the broad surface of the waste beneath. There was now a sudden exhibition of animal life, which changed the scene, as it were, by magic, to the very opposite extreme.

A few enormous bison bulls were first observed, scouring along the most distant roll of the prairie, and then succeeded long files of single beasts, which, in their turns, were followed by a dark mass of bodies, until the dun-coloured herbage of the plain was entirely lost in the deeper hue of their shaggy coats. The herd, as the column spread and

thickened, was like the endless flocks of the smaller birds, whose extended flanks are so often seen to heave up out of the abyss of the heavens, until they appear as countless as the leaves in those forests over which they wing their endless flight. Clouds of dust shot up in little columns from the centre of the mass, as some animal, more furious than the rest, ploughed the plain with his horns, and, from time to time, a deep, hollow bellowing was borne along on the wind, as though a thousand throats vented their plaints in a discordant murmuring.

A long and musing silence reigned in the party, as they gazed on this spectacle of wild and peculiar grandeur. It was at length broken by the trapper, who, having been long accustomed to similar sights, felt less of its influence, or, rather felt it in a less thrilling and absorbing manner, than those to whom the scene was more novel.

"There go ten thousand oxen in one drove, without keeper or master, except Him who made them, and gave them these open plains for their pasture! Ay, it is here that man may see the proofs of his wantonness and folly! Can the proudest governor in all the States go into his fields, and slaughter a nobler bullock than is here offered to the meanest hands? And when he has gotten his sirloin or his steak, can he eat it with as good a relish as he who has sweetened his food with wholesome toil, and earned it according to the law of natur', by honestly mastering that which the Lord hath put before him?"

"If the prairie platter is smoking with a buffalo's hump, I answer, no," interrupted the luxurious bee-hunter.

"Ay, boy, you have tasted, and you feel the genuine reasoning of the thing. But the herd is heading a little this-a-way, and it behoves us to make ready for their visit. If we hide ourselves

altogether, the horned brutes will break through the place and trample us beneath their feet, like so many creeping worms; so we will just put the weak ones apart, and take post, as becomes men and hunters, in the van."

As there was but little time to make the necessary arrangements, the whole party set about them in good earnest. Inez and Ellen were placed in the edge of the thicket on the side farthest from the approaching herd. Asinus was posted in the centre, in consideration of his nerves, and then the old man, with his three male companions, divided themselves in such a manner as they thought would enable them to turn the head of the rushing column, should it chance to approach too nigh their position. By the vacillating movements of some fifty or a hundred bulls, that led the advance, it remained questionable, for many moments, what course they intended to pursue. But a tremendous

and painful roar, which came from behind the cloud of dust that rose in the centre of the herd, and which was horridly answered by the screams of the carrion birds, that were greedily sailing directly above the flying drove, appeared to give a new impulse to their flight, and at once to remove every symptom of indecision. As if glad to seek the smallest signs of the forest, the whole of the affrighted herd became steady in its direction, rushing in a straight line towárd the little cover of bushes, which has already been so often named.

The appearance of danger was now, in reality, of a character to try the stoutest nerves. The flanks of the dark, moving mass, were advanced in such a manner as to make a concave line of the front, and every fierce eye, that was glaring from the shaggy wilderness of hair in which the entire heads of the males were enveloped, was rivetted with mad anxiety on the thicket. It seemed as if each

beast strove to outstrip his neighbour in gaining this desired cover, and as thousands in the rear pressed blindly on those in front, there was the appearance of an imminent risk that the leaders of the herd would be precipitated on the concealed party, in which case the destruction of every one of them was certain. Each of our adventurers felt the danger of his situation in a manner peculiar to his individual character and circumstances.

Middleton wavered. At times he felt inclined to rush through the bushes, and, seizing Inez, attempt to fly. Then recollecting the impossibility of outstripping the furious speed of an alarmed bison, he felt for his arms, as if determined to make head against the countless multitude of the drove. The faculties of Dr. Battius were quickly wrought up to the very summit of mental delusion. The dark forms of the herd lost their distinctness, and then the

naturalist began to fancy he beheld a wild collection of all the creatures of the world, rushing upon him in a body, as if to revenge the various injuries, which, in the course of a life of indefatigable labour in behalf of the natural sciences, he had inflicted on their several genera. The paralysis it occasioned in his system was like the effect of the incubus. Equally unable to fly or to advance, he stood riveted to the spot, until the infatuation became so complete, that the worthy naturalist was beginning, by a desperate effort of scientific resolution, even to class the different specimens. On the other hand, Paul shouted, and called on Ellen to come and assist him in shouting, but his voice was lost in the bellowings and trampling of the herd. Furious, and yet strangely excited by the obstinacy of the brutes and the wildness of the sight, and nearly maddened by sympathy, and a species of unconscious apprehension, in which the claims of nature were sin-

gularly mingled with concern for his mistress, he nearly split his throat in exhorting his aged friend to interfere.

"Come forth, old trapper," he shouted, "with your prairie inventions! or we shall be all smothered under a mountain of buffalo humps!"

The old man, who had stood all this while leaning on his rifle, and regarding the movements of the herd with a steady eye, now deemed it time to strike his blow. Levelling his piece at the foremost bull, with an agility that would have done credit to his youth, he fired. The animal received the bullet on the matted hair between his horns, and fell to his knees; but, shaking his head, he instantly arose, the very shock seeming to increase his exertions. There was now no longer time to hesitate. Throwing down his rifle, the trapper stretched forth his arms, and advanced from the cover with naked hands, directly towards the rushing column of the beasts.

The figure of a man, when sustained by the firmness and steadiness that intellect can only impart, rarely fails of commanding respect from all the inferior animals of the creation. The leading bulls recoiled, and for a single instant there was a sudden stop to their speed, a dense mass of bodies rolling up in front, until hundreds were seen floundering and tumbling on the plain. Then came another of those hollow bellowings from the rear, and set the herd again in motion. The head of the column, however, divided; the immoveable form of the trapper, cutting it, as it were, into two gliding streams of life. Middleton and Paul instantly profited by his example, and extended the feeble barrier by a similar exhibition of their own persons.

For a few moments, the new impulse given to the animals in front served to protect the thicket; but, as the body of the herd pressed more and more upon

the open line of its defenders, and the dust thickened so as to obscure their persons, there was at each instant a renewed danger of the beasts breaking through. It became necessary for the trapper and his companions to become still more and more alert; and they were gradually yielding before the headlong multitude, when a furious bull darted by Middleton, so near as to brush his person, and, at the next instant, swept through the thicket with the velocity of the wind.

"Close, and die for the ground!" shouted the old man, "or a thousand of the devils will be at his heels!"

All their efforts would have proved fruitless, however, against the living torrent, had not Asinus, whose domains had just been so rudely entered, lifted his voice, in the midst of the uproar. The most sturdy and furious of the bulls trembled at the alarming and unknown cry, and then each individual

brute was seen madly pressing from that very thicket, which, the moment before, he had endeavoured to reach, with the same sort of eagerness as that with which the murderer seeks the sanctuary.

As the stream divided, the place became clear; the two dark columns moving obliquely from the copse, to unite again at the distance of a mile, on its opposite side. The instant the old man saw the sudden effect which the voice of Asinus had produced, he coolly commenced reloading his rifle, indulging at the same time in a most heartfelt fit of his silent and peculiar merriment.

"There they go, like dogs, with so many half-filled shot-pouches dangling at their tails, and no fear of their breaking their order; for what the brutes in the rear did'nt hear with their own ears, they'll conceit they did: besides, if they change their minds, it may be no hard

matter to get the Jack to sing the rest of his tune!"

"The ass has spoken, but Balaam is silent!" cried the bee-hunter, catching his breath after a repeated burst of noisy mirth, that might possibly have added to the panic of the buffalos by its vociferation! "The man is as completely dumb-foundered, as though a swarm of young bees had settled on the end of his tongue, and he not willing to speak, for fear of their answer."

"How now, friend," continued the trapper, addressing the still motionless and entranced naturalist. "How now, friend; are you, who make your livelihood by booking the names and natur's of the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, frightened at a herd of scampering buffalos! Though, perhaps, you are ready to dispute my right to call them by a word that is in the mouth of every hunter and trader on the frontier!"

The old man was, however, mistaken in supposing he could excite the benumbed faculties of the Doctor, by provoking a discussion on this momentous topic. From that time, henceforth, he was never known, except on one occasion, to utter a word that indicated either the species or the genus of the animal. He obstinately refused the nutritious food of the whole ox family, and even to the present hour, now that he is established in all the scientific dignity and security of a *savant*, in one of the maritime towns, he turns his back with a shudder on those delicious and unrivalled viands, that are so often seen at the suppers of the craft, and which are unequalled by any thing that is served under the same name, at the boasted chop-houses of London, or at the most renowned of the Parisian restaurans. In short, the distaste of the worthy naturalist for beef was not unlike that which the shepherd some-

times produces, by first muzzling and fettering his delinquent dog, and then leaving him as a stepping stone, for the whole flock to use, in its transit over a wall, or through the opening of a sheep-fold; a process which is said to produce in the culprit a species of surfeit, on the subject of mutton, for ever after. By the time Paul and the trapper saw fit to terminate the fresh bursts of merriment, which the continued abstraction of their learned companion did not fail to excite, he commenced breathing again, as though the suspended action of his lungs had been renewed by the application of a pair of artificial bellows, and was heard to make use of the ever afterwards proscribed term, on that solitary occasion, to which we have just alluded.

"Boves Americani horridi!" exclaimed the Doctor, laying great stress on the latter word; after which he continued mute, like one who pondered on strange and unaccountable events.

"Ay, horrid eyes enough, I will willingly allow," returned the trapper; "and altogether the creatur' has a frightful look, to one unused to the sights and bustle of a natural life; but then the courage of the beast is in no way equal to its countenance. Lord, man, if you should once get fairly beset by a brood of grizzly bears, as happened to Hector and I, at the great falls of the Miss—Ah, here comes the tail of the herd, and yonder goes a pack of hungry wolves, ready to pick up the sick, or such as get a disjointed neck by a tumble. Ha! there are mounted men on their trail, or I'm no sinner! Here, lad; you may see them hereaway, just where the dust is scattering afore the wind. They are hovering around a wounded buffalo, making an end of the surly devil with their arrows!"

Middleton and Paul soon caught a glimpse of the dark group that the

quick eye of the old man had so readily detected. Some fifteen or twenty horsemen were, in truth, to be seen riding in quick circuits, about a noble bull, which stood at bay, too grievously hurt to fly, and yet seeming to disdain to fall, notwithstanding his hardy body had already been the target for a hundred arrows. A thrust from the lance of a powerful Indian, however, completed his conquest, and the brute gave up his obstinate hold of life with a roar, that passed bellowing over the place where our adventurers stood, and reaching the ears of the affrighted herd, added a new impulse to their flight.

"How well the Pawnee knew the philosophy of a buffalo hunt," said the old man, after he had stood regarding the animated scene for a few moments with very evident satisfaction. "You saw how he went off like the wind before the drove. It was in order that he might not taint the air, and that he might turn the flank, and

join—Ha! how is this! yonder Red-skins are no Pawnees! The feathers in their heads are from the wings and tails of owls—Ah! as I am but a miserable half-sighted trapper, it is a band of the accursed Siouxes! To cover, lads, to cover. A single cast of an eye this-a-way, would strip us of every rag of clothes, as surely as the lightning scorches the bush, and it might be that our very lives would be far from safe."

Middleton had already turned from the spectacle, to seek that which pleased him better, the sight of his young and beautiful bride. Paul seized the Doctor by the arm, and as the trapper followed with the smallest possible delay, the whole party was quickly collected within the cover of the thicket. After a few short explanations concerning the character of this new danger, the old man, on whom the whole duty of directing their movements was devolved, in deference to his great experience, continued his discourse as follows—

"This is a region, as you must all know, where a strong arm is far better than the right, and where the white law is as little known as needed. Therefore does every thing, now, depend on judgment and power. If," he continued, laying his finger on his cheek, like one who considered deeply all sides of the embarrassing situation in which he found himself—"if an invention could be framed, which would set these Siouxes and the brood of the squatter by the ears, then might we come in, like the buzzards after a fight atween the beasts, and pick up the gleanings of the ground—there are Pawnees nigh us, too! It is a certain matter, for yonder lad is not so far from his village without an errand. Here are therefore four parties within sound of a cannon, not one of whom can trust the other. All which makes movement a little difficult, in a district where covers are far from plenty. But we are three well-armed, and, I

think I may say, three stout-hearted men—"

"Four," interrupted Paul.

"Anan," said the old man, looking up for the first time at his companions.

"Four," repeated the bee-hunter, pointing to the naturalist.

"Every army has its hangers-on and idlers," rejoined the blunt border-man. "Friend, it will be necessary to slaughter this ass."

"To slay Asinus! such a deed would be an act of supererogatory cruelty."

"I know nothing of your words, which hide their meaning in sound; but that is cruel which sacrifices a Christian to a brute. This is what I call the reason of mercy. It would be just as safe to blow a trumpet, as to let the animal raise his voice again, inasmuch as it would prove a manifest challenge to the Siouxes."

"I will answer for the discretion of

Asinus, who seldom speaks without a reason."

"They say a man can be known by the company he keeps," retorted the old man, "and why not a brute! I once made a forced march, and went through a great deal of jeopardy, with a companion who never opened his mouth but to sing; and trouble enough and great concern of mind did the fellow give me. It was in that very business with your grand'ther, captain. But then he had a human throat, and well did he know how to use it, on occasion, though he didn't always stop to regard the time and seasons fit for such outcries. Ah's me! if I was now as I was then, it wouldn't be a band of thieving Siouxes that should easily drive me from such a lodgment as this! But what signifies boasting when sight and strength are both failing. The warrior, that the Delawares once saw fit to call after the

Hawk, for the goodness of his eyes, would now be better termed the Mole. In my judgment, therefore, it will be well to slay the brute."

"There's argument and good logic in it," said Paul; "music is music, and it's always noisy, whether it comes from a fiddle or a jack-ass. Therefore, I agree with the old man, and say, kill the beast."

"Friends," said the naturalist, looking with a sorrowful eye from one to another of his bloodily disposed companions; "slay not Asinus; he is a specimen of his kind, of whom much good and little evil can be said. Hardy and docile, for his *genus;* abstemious and patient, even for his humble *species.* We have journeyed much together, and his death would grieve me. How would it trouble thy spirit, venerable venator, to separate, in such an untimely manner, from your faithful hound?"

"The animal shall not die," said the old man, suddenly clearing his throat, in a manner that proved he felt the fullest force of the appeal. "But his voice must be smothered. Bind his jaws with the halter, and then I think we may trust the rest to Providence."

With this double security for the discretion of Asinus, (for Paul instantly bound the muzzle of the ass in the manner required), the trapper seemed content. After which he proceeded to the margin of the thicket to reconnoitre.

The uproar, which attended the passage of the herd, was now gone, or rather it was heard rolling along the prairie, at the distance of a mile. The clouds of dust were already blown away by the wind, and a clear range was left to the eye, in that place where, ten minutes before, there existed such a strange scene of wildness and confusion. The Siouxes had completed their conquest, and, apparently satisfied with

this addition to the numerous previous captures they had made, they now seemed content to let the remainder of the herd escape. A dozen remained around the carcass, over which a few buzzards were balancing themselves, with steady wings and greedy eyes, while the rest were riding about, as if in quest of such further booty as might come in their way, on the trail of so vast a drove. The trapper measured the proportions and scanned the equipments of such individuals as drew nearer to the side of the thicket, with careful eyes. At length he pointed out one among them, to Middleton, as Weucha.

"Now, know we not only who they are, but their errand," the old man continued, deliberately shaking his head. "They have lost the trail of the squatter, and are on its hunt. These buffalos have crossed their path, and in chasing the animals, bad luck has led them in open sight of the hill on which the brood

of Ishmael have harboured. Do you see yon birds watching for the offals of the beast they have killed? Therein is a moral, which teaches the manner of a prairie life. A band of Pawnees are outlying for these very Siouxes, as you see the buzzards looking down for their food, and it behoves us, as Christian men, who have so much at stake, to look down upon them both. Ha! what brings yonder two skirting reptiles to a stand! As you live, they have found the place where the miserable son of the squatter met his death!"

The old man was not mistaken. Weucha, and a savage who accompanied him, had reached that spot, which has already been mentioned as furnishing such frightful evidences of violence and bloodshed. There they sat on their horses, examining the well-known signs with all the intelligence that distinguishes the habits of Indians. Their scrutiny was long, and apparently

not without distrust. At length they both raised a cry at the same instant, that was scarcely less piteous and startling than that which the hounds had before made over the same fatal signs, and which did not fail to draw the whole band immediately around them, as the fell bark of the jackal is said to gather his comrades to the chase.

CHAPTER IX.

Welcome, ancient Pistol.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was not long before the trapper pointed out the commanding person of Mahtoree, as the leader of the Siouxes. This chief, who had been among the last to obey the vociferous summons of Weucha, no sooner reached the spot, where his whole party was now gathered, than he threw himself from his horse, and proceeded to examine the marks of the extraordinary trail, with that degree of dignity and attention which became his high and responsible station. The warriors, for it was but

too evident that they were to a man of that fearless and ruthless class, awaited the result of his investigation with patient reserve; none but a few of the principal braves presuming even to speak, while their leader was thus gravely occupied. It was several minutes before Mahtoree seemed satisfied. He then directed his eyes along the ground to those several places where Ishmael had found the same revolting evidences of the passage of some bloody struggle, and motioned to his people to follow.

The whole band advanced in a body towards the thicket, until they came to a halt within a few yards of the precise spot where Esther had stimulated her sluggish sons to break into the cover. The reader will readily imagine that the trapper and his companions were not indifferent observers of such a threatening movement. The old man summoned all who were capable of bearing arms to his

side, and demanded, in very unequivocal terms, though in a voice that was suitably lowered, in order to escape the ears of their dangerous neighbours, whether they were disposed to make battle for their liberty, or whether they should try the milder expedient of conciliation. As it was a subject in which all had an equal interest, he put the question as to a council of war, and not without some slight exhibition of the lingering vestiges of a nearly extinct military pride. Paul and the Doctor were diametrically opposed to each other in opinion; the former advocating an immediate appeal to arms, and the latter as warmly espousing the policy of pacific measures. Middleton, who saw that there was great danger of a hot verbal dispute between two men, who were governed by feelings so entirely different, saw fit to assume the office of arbiter; or rather to decide the question, in virtue of his situation making him a sort of umpire. He also

leaned to the side of peace, for he evidently saw that, in consequence of the vast superiority of their enemies, violence would irretrievably lead to their destruction.

The trapper listened to the reasons of the young soldier with great attention; and, as they were given with the steadiness of one who did not suffer apprehension to blind his judgment, they did not fail to produce a suitable impression.

"It is rational," rejoined the trapper, when the other had delivered his reasons: "It is very rational, for what man cannot move with his strength, he must circumvent with his wits. It is reason that makes him stronger than the buffalo and swifter than the moose. Now stay you here, and keep yourselves close. My life and my traps are but of little value, when the welfare of so many human souls are concerned, and, moreover, I may say that I know the windings of

Indian cunning. Therefore will I go alone upon the prairie. It may so happen, that I can yet draw the eyes of a Sioux from this spot and give you time and room to fly."

As if resolved to listen to no remonstrance, the old man quietly shouldered his rifle, and moving leisurely through the thicket, he issued on the plain, at a point whence he might first appear before the eyes of the Siouxes, without exciting their suspicions that he came from its cover.

The instant that the figure of a man, dressed in the garb of a hunter, and bearing the well-known and much dreaded rifle, appeared before the eyes of the Siouxes, there was a sensible, though a suppressed, sensation in the band. The artifice of the trapper had so far succeeded as to render it extremely doubtful whether he came from some point on the open prairie, or from the thicket, though the Indians still continued

to cast frequent and suspicious glances at the cover. They had made their halt at the distance of an arrow-flight from the bushes, but when the stranger came sufficiently nigh to show that the deep coating of red and brown, which time and exposure had given to his features, was laid upon the original colour of a Pale-face, they slowly receded from the spot, until they reached a distance that might render the aim of fire-arms less fatal.

In the mean time the old man continued to advance, until he had got nigh enough to make himself heard without difficulty. Here he stopped, and dropping his rifle to the earth, he raised his hand with the palm outward, in token of peace. After uttering a few words of reproach to his hound, who watched the savage group with eyes that seemed to recognise them as the former captors of his master, he spoke in the Sioux tongue—

"My brothers are welcome," he said, cunningly constituting himself the master of the region in which they had met, and assuming the offices of hospitality: "they are far from their villages, and are hungry. Will they follow to my lodge, to eat and sleep?"

No sooner was his voice heard, than the yell of pleasure, which burst from a dozen mouths, convinced the sagacious trapper that he also was recognized. Feeling that it was too late to retreat, he profited by the confusion which prevailed among them, while Weucha was explaining his character, to advance, until he was again face to face with the redoubtable Mahtoree himself. The second interview between these two men, each of whom was extraordinary in his way, was marked by the usual caution of the frontiers. They stood, for nearly a minute, examining each other without speaking.

"Where are your young men?" stern-

ly demanded the Teton chieftain, after he found that the immoveable features of the trapper refused to betray any of their master's secrets under his intimidating look.

"The Long-knives do not come in bands to trap the beaver. I am alone."

"Your head is white, but you have a forked tongue. Mahtoree has been in your camp. He knows that you are not alone. Where is your young wife, and the warrior that I found upon the prairie?"

"I have no wife. I have told my brother that the woman and her friend were strangers. The words of a grey head should be heard, and not forgotten. The Dahcotahs found travellers asleep, and they thought they had no need of horses. The women and children of a Pale-face are not used to go far on foot. Let them be sought where you left them."

The eyes of the Teton flashed fire as he answered—

"They are gone: but Mahtoree is a wise chief, and his eyes can see a great distance."

"Does the partisan of the Tetons see men on these naked fields?" retorted the trapper, with great steadiness of mien: "I am very old, and my eyes grow dim. Where do they stand?"

The chief remained silent a moment, as if he disdained to contest any further the truth of a fact, concerning which he was already satisfied. Then, pointing to the traces on the earth, he said, with a sudden transition to mildness, in his eye and manner—

"My father has learnt wisdom in many winters; can he tell me whose moccasin has left this trail?"

"There have been wolves and buffalos on the prairies; and there may have been cougars too."

Mahtoree glanced his eye at the thicket, as if he thought the latter suggestion not impossible. Pointing to the place, he ordered his young men to reconnoitre it more closely, cautioning them, at the same time, with a stern look at the trapper, to beware of treachery from the Big-knives. Three or four half-naked, eager-looking youths, lashed their horses at the word, and darted away to obey the mandate. The old man trembled a little for the discretion of Paul, when he saw this demonstration. The Tetons encircled the place two or three times, approaching nigher and nigher at each circuit, and then gallopped back to their leader to report that the copse seemed empty. Notwithstanding the trapper watched the eye of Mahtoree, to detect the inward movements of his mind, and, if possible, to anticipate, in order to direct his suspicions; the utmost sagacity of one so long accustomed to study the

cold habits of the Indian race, could, however, detect no symptom or expression that denoted how far he credited or distrusted this intelligence. Instead of replying to the information of his scouts, he spoke kindly to his horse, and, motioning to a youth to receive the bridle, or rather halter, by which he governed the animal, he took the trapper by the arm, and led him a little apart from the rest of the band.

"Has my brother been a warrior?" said the wily Teton, in a tone that he intended should be conciliating.

"Do the leaves cover the trees in the season of fruits? Go. The Dahcotahs have not seen as many warriors living as I have looked on in their blood! But what signifies idle remembrancing," he added in English, "when limbs grow stiff, and sight is failing!"

The chief regarded him a moment with a severe look, as if he would lay bare the falsehood he had heard; but

meeting in the calm eye and steady mien of the trapper a confirmation of the truth of what he said, he took the hand of the old man and laid it gently on his head, in token of the respect that was due to the other's years and experience.

"Why, then, do the Big-knives tell their red brethren to bury the tomahawk," he said, "when their own young men never forget that they are braves, and meet each other so often with bloody hands?"

"My nation is more numerous than the buffalos on the prairies, or the pigeons in the air. Their quarrels are frequent, yet their warriors are few. None go out on the war-path but they who are gifted with the qualities of a brave, and, therefore, such see many battles."

"It is not so—my father is mistaken," returned Mahtoree, indulging in a smile of exulting penetration, at the very instant he corrected the force of his denial, in deference to the years and

services of one so aged: "the Big-knives are very wise, and they are men; all of them would be warriors. They would leave the Red-skins to dig roots and hoe the corn. But a Dahcotah is not born to live like a woman; he must strike the Pawnee and the Omahaw, or he will lose the name of his fathers."

"The Master of Life looks with an open eye on his children, who die in a battle that is fought for the right; but he is blind, and his ears are shut to the cries of an Indian, who is killed when plundering or doing evil to his neighbour."

"My father is old," said Mahtoree, looking at his aged companion, with an expression of irony, that sufficiently denoted he was one of those who overstep the trammels of education, and who are, perhaps, a little given to abuse the mental liberty they thus obtain: "he is *very* old: has he made a journey to the far country; and has he been at the

trouble to come back, to tell the young men what he has seen?"

"Teton," returned the trapper, throwing the breech of his rifle to the earth with startling vehemence, and regarding his companion with steady serenity, "I have heard that there are men, among my people, who study their great medicines until they believe themselves to be gods, and who laugh at all faith except in their own vanities. It may be true—it *is* true; for I have seen them. When man is shut up in towns and schools, with his own follies, it may be easy to believe himself greater than the Master of Life; but a warrior, who lives in a house with the clouds for its roof, where he can at any moment look both at the heavens and at the earth, and who daily sees the power of the Great Spirit, should be more humble. A Dahcotah chieftain ought to be too wise to laugh at justice."

The crafty Mahtoree, who saw that

his free-thinking was not likely to produce a favourable impression on the old man, instantly changed his ground, by alluding to the more immediate subject of their interview. Laying his hand gently on the shoulder of the trapper, he led him forward until they both stood within fifty feet of the margin of the thicket. Here he fastened his penetrating eyes on the other's honest countenance, and continued the discourse—

"If my father has hid his young men in the bush, let him tell them to come forth. You see that a Dahcotah is not afraid. Mahtoree is a great chief! A warrior, whose head is white, and who is about to go to the Land of Spirits, cannot have a tongue with two ends, like a serpent."

"Dahcotah, I have told no lie. Since the Great Spirit made me a man, I have lived in the wilderness, or on these naked plains, without lodge or family.

I am a hunter, and go on my path alone."

"My father has a good carabine. Let him point it in the bush and fire."

The old man hesitated a moment, and then slowly prepared himself to give this delicate assurance of the truth of what he said, without which he plainly perceived the suspicions of his crafty companion could not be lulled. As he lowered his rifle, his eye, although greatly dimmed and weakened by age, ran over the confused collection of objects, that lay embedded amid the party-coloured foliage of the thicket, until it succeeded in catching a glimpse of the brown covering of the stem of a small tree. With this object in view, he raised the piece to a level and fired. The bullet had no sooner glided from the barrel than a tremor seized the hands of the trapper, which, had it occurred a moment sooner, would have utterly disqualified him for such a hazardous

experiment. A frightful silence for an instant succeeded the report, during which he expected to hear the shrieks of the females, and then, as the smoke whirled away in the wind, he caught a view of the fluttering bark, and felt assured that all his former skill was not entirely departed from him. Dropping the piece to the earth, he turned again to his companion with an air of the utmost composure, and demanded—

"Is my brother satisfied?"

"Mahtoree is a chief of the Dahcotahs," returned the cunning Teton, laying his hand on his chest, in acknowledgment of the other's sincerity. "He knows that a warrior, who has smoked at so many council-fires, until his head has grown white, would not be found in wicked company. But did not my father once ride on a horse, like a rich chief of the Pale-faces, instead of travelling on foot like a hungry Konza?"

"Never! The Wahcondah has given

me legs, and he has given me resolution to use them. For sixty summers and winters did I journey in the woods of America, and ten tiresome years have I dwelt on these open fields without finding need to call often upon the gifts of the other creatur's of the Lord to carry me from place to place."

"If my father has so long lived in the shade, why has he come upon the prairies? The sun will scorch him."

The old man looked sorrowfully about for a moment, and then turning, with a sort of confidential air to the other, he replied—

"I passed the spring, summer, and autumn of life among the trees. The winter of my days had come, and found me where I loved to be, in the quiet—ay, and in the honesty of the woods! Teton, then I slept happily where my eyes could look up through the branches of the pines and the beeches, to the very dwelling of the Good Spirit of my

people. If I had need to open my heart to him, while his fires were burning above my head, the door was open and before my eyes. But the axes of the choppers awoke me. For a long time my ears heard nothing, but the uproar of clearings. I bore it like a warrior and a man; there was a reason that I should bear it: but when that reason was ended, I bethought me to get beyond the accursed sounds. It was trying to the courage and to the habits, but I had heard of these vast and naked fields, and I came hither to escape the wasteful temper of my people. Tell me, Dahcotah, have I not done well?"

The trapper laid his long lean finger on the naked shoulder of the Indian as he ended, and seemed to demand his felicitations on his ingenuity and success, with a ghastly smile, in which triumph was singularly blended with regret. His companion listened intently, and

replied to the question, by saying, in the sententious manner of his race—

"The head of my father is very gray; he has always lived with men, and he has seen every thing. What he does is good; what he speaks is wise. Now let him say, is he sure that he is a stranger to the Big-knives, who are looking for their beasts on every side of the prairies, and cannot find them?"

"Dahcotah, what I have said is true. I live alone, and never do I mingle with men whose skins are white, if—"

His mouth was suddenly closed by an interruption that was as mortifying as it was unexpected. The words were still on his tongue, when the bushes on the side of the thicket where they stood opened, and the whole of the party whom he had just left, and in whose behalf he was endeavouring to reconcile his love of truth to the necessity of prevaricating, came openly into view. A pause of mute astonishment succeeded

this unlooked-for spectacle. Then Mahtoree, who did not suffer a muscle or a joint to betray the wonder and surprise he actually experienced, motioned towards the advancing friends of the trapper with an air of assumed civility and a smile, that lighted his fierce, dark visage, as the glare of the setting sun reveals the vast volumes and portentous load of the cloud that is seen charged to bursting with the electric fluid. He, however, disdained to speak, or to give any other evidence of his intentions than by calling to his side the distant band, who sprang forward at his beck with the alacrity of willing subordinates.

In the mean time the friends of the old man continued to advance. Middleton himself was foremost, supporting the light and aërial-looking figure of Inez, on whose anxious and speaking countenance he cast such occasional glances of tender interest as, in similar circumstances, a father would have given to

his child. Paul led Ellen close in their rear. But while the eye of the bee-hunter did not neglect his blooming companion, it scowled angrily, resembling more the aspect of the sullen and retreating bear than the soft intelligence of a favoured suitor. Obed and Asinus came last, the former leading his companion with a degree of fondness that could hardly be said to be exceeded by any other of the party. The approach of the naturalist was far less rapid than that of those who preceded him. His feet seemed equally reluctant to advance or to remain stationary; his position bearing a great analogy to that of Mahomet's coffin, with the exception that the quality of repulsion rather than that of attraction held him in a state of rest. The repulsive power in his rear, however, appeared to predominate, and by a singular exception, as he would have said himself, to all philosophical principles, it rather increased than diminished by

distance. As the eyes of the naturalist steadily maintained a position that was the opposite of his route, they served to give a direction to those of the observers of all these movements, and at once furnished a sufficient clue by which to unravel the mystery of so sudden a debouchement from the cover.

Another cluster of stout and armed men was seen at no great distance, just rounding a point of the thicket, and moving directly, though cautiously, towards the place where the band of the Siouxes was posted, as a squadron of cruisers is often seen to steer across the waste of waters, towards the rich but well-protected convoy. In short, the family of the squatter, or at least such among them as were capable of bearing arms, appeared in view, on the broad prairie, evidently bent on revenging their wrongs.

Mahtoree and his party slowly retired from the thicket, the moment they caught

a view of the strangers, until they halted on a swell that commanded a wide and unobstructed view of the naked fields on which they stood. Here the Dahcotah appeared disposed to make his stand, and to bring matters to an issue. Notwithstanding this retreat, in which he compelled the trapper to accompany him, Middleton still advanced, until he too halted on the same elevation, and within speaking distance of the warlike Siouxes. The borderers in their turn took a favourable position, though at a much greater distance. The three groups now resembled so many fleets at sea, lying with their topsails to the masts, with the commendable precaution of reconnoitring, before each could ascertain who among the strangers might be considered as friends and who as foes.

During this moment of suspense, the dark, threatening eye of Mahtoree rolled from one of the strange parties to the

other, in keen and hasty examination, and then it turned its withering look on the old man, as the chief said, in a tone of high and bitter scorn—

"The Big-knives are fools! It is easier to catch the cougar asleep than to find a blind Dahcotah. Did the white head think to ride on the horse of a Sioux?"

The trapper, who had found time to collect his perplexed faculties, saw at once that Middleton, having perceived Ishmael on the trail by which they had fled, preferred trusting to the hospitality of the savages, than to the treatment he would be likely to receive from the hands of the squatter. He therefore disposed himself to clear the way for the favourable reception of his friends, since he found that the unnatural coalition became necessary to secure the liberty, if not the lives, of the party.

"Did my brother ever go on a war-

path to strike my people?" he calmly demanded of the indignant chief, who still awaited his reply.

The lowering aspect of the Teton warrior so far lost its severity, as to suffer a gleam of pleasure and triumph to lighten its ferocity, as, sweeping his arm in an entire circle around his person, he answered—

"What tribe or nation has not felt the blows of the Dahcotahs? Mahtoree is their partisan."

"And has he found the Big-knives women, or has he found them men?"

A multitude of fierce passions seemed struggling together in the tawny countenance of the Indian, as he heard this interrogatory. For a moment inextinguishable hatred seemed to hold the mastery, and then a nobler expression, and one that better became the character of a brave warrior, got possession of his features, and maintained itself until, first throwing aside his light robe of

pictured deer-skin, and pointing to the scar of a bayonet in his breast, he replied—

"It was given as it was taken, face to face."

"It is enough. My brother is a brave chief, and he should be a wise one. Let him look; is that a warrior of the Pale-faces? Was it one such as that who gave the great Dahcotah his hurt?"

The eyes of Mahtoree followed the direction of the old man's extended arm, until they rested on the drooping form of Inez. The look of the Teton was long, rivetted, and admiring. Like that of the young Pawnee, it resembled more the gaze of a mortal on some heavenly image, than the admiration with which man is wont to contemplate even the loveliness of woman. Starting, as if suddenly self-convicted of forgetfulness, the chief next turned his eyes on Ellen, where they lingered an instant with a much more intelligible expression of admiration, and

then pursued their course until they had taken another glance at each individual of the party.

"My brother sees that my tongue is not forked," continued the trapper, watching the emotions the other betrayed with a readiness of comprehension little inferior to that of the Teton himself. "The Big-knives do not send their women to war. I know that the Dahcotahs will smoke with the strangers."

"Mahtoree is a great chief. The Big-knives are welcome," said the Teton, laying his hand on his breast, with an air of lofty politeness that would have done credit to any state of society. "The arrows of my young men are in their quivers."

The trapper motioned to Middleton to approach, and in a few moments the two parties were blended in one, each of the males having exchanged friendly greetings after the fashions of the prairie warriors. But, even while engaged in

this hospitable manner, the Dahcotah did not fail to keep a strict watch on the more distant party of white men, as though he still distrusted an artifice, or sought a further explanation. The old man, in his turn, perceived the necessity of being more explicit, and of securing the slight and equivocal advantage he had already obtained. While affecting to examine the group, which still lingered at the spot where it had first halted, as if to discover the characters of those who composed it, he plainly saw that Ishmael contemplated immediate hostilities. The result of a conflict on the open prairie, between a dozen resolute border-men, and the half-armed natives, even though seconded by their white allies, was in his experienced jüdgment a point of great uncertainty, and though far from reluctant to engage in the struggle on account of himself, the aged trapper thought it far more worthy of his years and his character to avoid than

to court the contest. His feelings were, for obvious reasons, in accordance with those of Paul and Middleton, who had lives still more precious than their own to watch over and protect. In this dilemma, the three consulted on the means of escaping the frightful consequences, which might immediately follow a single act of hostility on the part of the borderers, the old man taking care that their communication should, in the eyes of those who noted the expression of their countenances with jealous watchfulness, bear the appearance of explanations as to the reason, why such a party of travellers was met so far in the deserts.

"I know that the Dahcotahs are a wise and great people," at length the trapper commenced, again addressing himself to the chief; "but does not their partisan know a single brother who is base?"

The eye of Mahtoree wandered proudly around his band, but rested a

moment reluctantly on Weucha, as he answered—

"The Master of Life has made chiefs, and warriors, and women;" conceiving that he thus embraced all the gradations of human excellence from the highest to the lowest.

"And he has also made Pale-faces, who are wicked. Such are they whom my brother sees yonder."

"Do they go on foot to do wrong?" demanded the Teton, with a wild gleam from his eyes, that sufficiently betrayed how well he knew the reason why they were reduced to so humble an expedient.

"Their beasts are gone. But their powder, and their lead, and their blankets, still remain."

"Do they carry their riches in their hands, like miserable Konzas? or are they brave, and leave them with the women, as men should do, who know where to find what they lose."

"My brother sees the spot of blue across the prairie; look, the sun has touched it for the last time to-day."

"Mahtoree is not a mole."

"It is a rock, and on it are the goods of the Big-knives."

An expression of savage joy shot into the dark countenance of the Teton as he listened; turning to the old man, he seemed to read his soul for an instant, as if to assure himself he was not deceived. Then he bent his look on the party of Ishmael and counted its number.

"One warrior is wanting," he said.

"Does my brother see the buzzards? There is his grave. Did he find blood on the prairie? It was his."

"Enough! Mahtoree is a wise chief. Put your women on the horses of the Dahcotahs; we shall see, for our eyes are open very wide."

The trapper wasted no unnecessary words in farther explanations. Familiar with the brevity and promptitude of

the natives, he immediately communicated the result to his companions. Paul was mounted in an instant, with Ellen at his back. A few more moments were necessary to assure Middleton of the security and ease of Inez. While he was thus engaged, Mahtoree advanced to the side of the beast he had allotted to this service, which was his own, and manifested an intention to occupy his customary place on its back. The young soldier seized the reins of the animal, and glances of sudden anger and lofty pride were exchanged between them.

"No man takes this seat but myself," said Middleton, sternly, in English.

"Mahtoree is a great chief!" retorted the savage; neither comprehending the meaning of the other's words.

"The Dahcotah will be too late," whispered the old man at his elbow, "see; the Big-knives are afraid, and they will soon run."

The Teton chief instantly abandoned his claim, and threw himself on another horse, directing one of his young men to furnish a similar accommodation for the trapper. The warriors, who were dismounted, got up behind as many of their companions. Doctor Battius bestrode Asinus, and, notwithstanding the brief interruption, in half the time we have taken to relate it the whole party was prepared to move.

When he saw that all were ready, Mahtoree gave the signal to advance. A few of the best mounted of the warriors, the chief himself included, moved a little in front, and made a threatening demonstration, as if they intended to attack the strangers. The squatter, who was in truth slowly retiring, instantly halted his party, and showed a willing front. Instead, however, of coming within reach of the dangerous aim of the western rifle, the subtle savages kept wheeling about the

strangers, until they had made a half circuit, keeping the latter in constant expectation of an assault. Then, perfectly secure of their object, the Tetons raised a loud shout, and darted across the prairie in a line for the distant rock, with the directness, and nearly with the velocity, of the arrow that has just been shot from its bow.

CHAPTER X.

Dally not with the Gods, but get thee gone.
Signor Baptista, shall I lead the way?

SHAKSPEARE.

MAHTOREE had scarcely given the first intimation of his real design, before a general discharge from the borderers proved how well they understood it. The distance, and the rapidity of the flight, however, rendered their fire perfectly harmless. As a proof how little he regarded the hostility of their party, the Dahcotah chieftain answered the report with a yell, and flourishing his carabine above his head, he made a circuit on the plain, followed by his chosen warriors, as if in very scorn of

the impotent attempt of his enemies. As the main body continued the direct course, this little band of the *elite*, in returning from its wild exhibition of savage contempt, took its place in the rear, with a dexterity and concert of action, that showed the manœuvre had been contemplated.

Volley swiftly succeeded volley, until the enraged squatter was reluctantly compelled to abandon the idea of injuring his enemies by means so feeble. Relinquishing his fruitless attempt, he commenced a rapid pursuit, occasionally discharging a rifle, in order to give the alarm to the garrison, which he had prudently left under the command of the redoubtable Esther herself. In this manner the chace was continued for many minutes, the horsemen gradually gaining on their pursuers, who maintained the race, however, with an incredible power of foot.

As the little speck of blue rose

against the heavens, like an island issuing from the deep, the savages occasionally raised a yell of triumph. But the mists of evening were already gathering along the whole of the eastern margin of the prairie, and before the band had made half of the necessary distance, the dim outline of the rock had melted into the haze of the back-ground. Indifferent to this circumstance, which rather favoured than disconcerted his plans, Mahtoree, who had again ridden in front, held on his course with the accuracy of a hound of the truest scent, merely slackening his speed a little, as the horses of his party were by this time thoroughly blown. It was at this stage of the enterprise that the old man rode up to the side of Middleton, and addressed him as follows, in English—

"Here is likely to be a thieving business, and one in which I must say I have but a small relish to be a partner."

"What would you do? It would be

fatal to trust ourselves in the hands of the miscreants in our rear."

"Tut, for miscreants, be they red or be they white. Look a-head, lad, as if ye were talking of our medicines, or perhaps praising the Teton beasts; for the knaves love to hear their horses commended, the same as a foolish mother in the settlements is fond of hearing the praises of her wilful child. So, pat the animal, and lay your hand on the gew-gaws with which the Red-skins have ornamented his mane, giving your eye, as it were, to one thing, and your mind to another. Listen; if matters are managed with judgment, we may leave these Tetons as the night sets in."

"A blessed thought!" exclaimed Middleton, who retained a painful remembrance of the look of admiration with which Mahtoree had contemplated the loveliness of Inez, as well as of his subsequent presumption in daring to wish

to take the office of her protector on himself.

"Lord, Lord! what a weak creatur' is man, when the gifts of natur' are smothered in bookish knowledge and womanly manners. Such another start would tell these imps at our elbows that we were plotting against them, just as plainly as if it were whispered in their ears by a Sioux tongue. Ay, ay, I know the devils; they look as innocent as so many frisky fawns, but there is not one among them all that has not an eye on our smallest motions. Therefore, what is to be done is to be done in wisdom, in order to circumvent their cunning. That is right, pat his neck and smile, as if you praised the horse, and keep the ear on my side open to my words. Be careful not to worry your beast, for though but little skilled in horses, reason teaches that breath is needful in a hard push, and that a weary leg makes a dull race. Be ready to mind

the signal, when you hear a whine from old Hector. The first will be to make ready; the second, to edge out of the crowd, and the third, to go.—Am I understood?"

"Perfectly, perfectly," said Middleton, trembling, in his excessive eagerness to put the plan in instant execution; and pressing the little arm which encircled his body, to his heart. "Perfectly. Hasten, hasten!"

"Ay, the beast is no sloth," continued the trapper, in the Teton language, as if he continued the discourse, edging cautiously through the dusky throng at the same time, until he found himself riding at the side of Paul. He communicated his intentions in the same guarded manner as before. The high-spirited and fearless bee-hunter received the intelligence with delight, declaring his readiness to engage the whole of the savage band, should it become necessary to effect their object.

When the old man drew off from the side of this pair also, he cast his eyes about him, to discover the situation occupied by the naturalist.

The Doctor, with infinite labour to himself and Asinus, had maintained a position in the very centre of the Siouxes, so long as there existed the smallest reason for believing that any of the missiles of Ishmael might arrive in contact with his person. After this danger had diminished, or rather disappeared entirely, his own courage revived, while that of his steed began to droop. To this mutual, but very material change, was owing the fact, that the rider and the ass were now to be sought among that portion of the band who formed a sort of rear-guard. Hither, then, the trapper contrived to turn his steed, without exciting the suspicions of any of his subtle companions.

"Friend," commenced the old man,

when he found himself in a situation favourable to discourse; "should you like to pass a dozen years among the savages, with a shaved head, and a painted countenance, with, perhaps, a couple of wives, and five or six children of the half breed, to call you father?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the startled naturalist. "I am indisposed to matrimony in general, and more especially to all admixture of the varieties of *species*, which only tend to tarnish the beauty, and to interrupt the harmony of nature. Moreover, it is a painful innovation on the order of all nomenclatures."

"Ay, ay, you have reason enough for your distaste to such a life; but should these Siouxes get you fairly into their village, such would be your luck, as certain as the sun rises and sets at the pleasure of the Lord."

"Marry me to a woman who is not adorned with the comeliness of the

species!" responded the Doctor. "Of what crime have I been guilty, that so grievous a punishment should await the offence? To marry a man against the movements of his will, is to do a violence to human nature!"

"Now that you speak of natur', I have hopes that the gift of reason has not altogether deserted your brain," returned the old man, with a covert expression playing about the angles of his deep-set eyes, which betrayed he was not entirely destitute of humour. "Nay, they may conceive you a remarkable subject for their kindness, and for that matter marry you to five or six. I have known, in my days, favoured chiefs, who had numberless wives."

"But why should they meditate this vengeance?" demanded the Doctor, whose hair began to rise, as if each fibre was possessed of sensibility; "What evil have I done?"

"It is the fashion of their kindness. When they come to learn that you are a great medicine, they will adopt you in the tribe, and some mighty chief will give you his name, and perhaps his daughter; or, it may be a wife or two of his own, who have dwelt long in his lodge, and of whose value he is a judge by experience."

"The Governor and Founder of natural harmony protect me!" ejaculated the Doctor. "I have no affinity to a single consort, much less to duplicates and triplicates of the *class!* I shall certainly essay a flight from their abodes before I mingle in so violent a conjunction."

"There is reason in your words; but why not attempt the race you speak of, now?"

The naturalist looked fearfully around him, as if he had an inclination to make an instant exhibition of his desperate

intention; but the dusky figures, who were riding about on every side of him, seemed suddenly tripled in number, and the darkness, that was already thickening on the prairie, appeared in his eyes to possess the glare of high noon.

"It would be premature, and reason forbids it," he answered. "Leave me, venerable venator, to the council of my own thoughts; and when my plans are properly classed, I will advise you of my resolutions."

"Resolutions!" repeated the old man, shaking his head a little contemptuously, as he gave the rein to his horse, and allowed him to mingle with the steeds of the savages—"Resolution is a word that is talked of in the settlements and felt on the borders. Does my brother know the beast on which the Pale-face rides?" he continued, addressing a gloomy-looking warrior, in his own tongue, and making a motion with his arm, that at the same time directed his

attention to the naturalist and the meek Asinus.

"The Teton turned his eyes for a minute on the animal; but disdained to manifest the smallest portion of that wonder he had felt, in common with all his companions, on first viewing so rare a quadruped. The trapper was not ignorant, that while asses and mules were beginning to be known to those tribes who dwelt nearest the Mexicos, they were not usually encountered so far north as the waters of La Platte. He therefore managed to read the mute astonishment that lay so deeply concealed in the tawny visage of the savage, and took his measures accordingly.

"Does my brother think that the rider is a warrior of the Pale-faces?" he demanded, when he believed that sufficient time had elapsed for a full examination of the pacific mien of the naturalist.

The flash of scorn, which shot across the features of the Teton, was visible even by the dim light of the stars.

"Is a Dahcotah a fool?" was the answer.

"They are a wise nation, whose eyes are never shut; much do I wonder that they have not seen the great medicine of the Big-knives."

"Wagh!" exclaimed his companion, suffering the whole of his amazement to burst out of his dark, rigid countenance, at the surprise, like a flash of lightning illuminating the gloom of midnight.

"The Dahcotah knows that my tongue is not forked. Let him open his eyes wider. Does he not see a very great medicine?"

The light was not necessary to recal to the savage, each feature in the really remarkable costume and equipage of Dr. Battius. In common with the rest of the band, and in conformity with the universal practice of the Indians, this

warrior, while he had suffered no gaze of idle curiosity to disgrace his manhood, had not permitted a single distinctive mark, which might characterize any one of the strangers, to escape his vigilance. He knew the air, the stature, the dress, and the features, even to the colour of the eyes and of the hair, of every one of the Big-knives, whom he had thus strangely encountered; and deeply had he ruminated on the causes, which could have led a party so singularly constituted, into the haunts of the rude inhabitants of his native wastes. He had already considered the several physical powers of the whole party, and had duly compared their abilities, with what he supposed might have been their intentions. Warriors they were not, for the Big-knives, like the Siouxes, left their women in their villages when they went out on the bloody path. The same objections applied to them as hunters, and even as

traders—the two characters under which the white men commonly appeared in their villages. He had heard of a great council, at which the Menah-ashah, or Long-knives, and the Wash-sheomantiqua, or Spaniards, had smoked together, when the latter had sold to the former their incomprehensible rights over those vast regions, through which his nation had roamed, in freedom, for so many ages. His simple mind had not been able to embrace the reasons, why one people should thus assume a superiority over the possessions of another; and it will readily be perceived, that at the hint just received from the trapper, he was not indisposed to fancy that some of the hidden subtlety of that magical influence, of which he was so firm a believer, was about to be practised by the unsuspecting subject of their conversation, in furtherance of these mysterious claims. Abandoning, therefore, all the reserve and dig-

nity of his manner, under the conscious helplessness of ignorance, he turned to the old man, and stretching forth his arms, as if to denote how much he lay at his mercy, he said—

"Let my father look at me. I am a wild man of the prairies; my body is naked; my hands empty; my skin red. I have struck the Pawnees, the Konzas, the Omahaws, the Osages, and even the Long-knives. I am a man amid warriors, but a woman among the conjurors. Let my father speak: the ears of the Teton are open. He listens like a deer to the step of the cougar."

"Such are the wise and uns'archable ways of one who alone knows good from evil!" exclaimed the trapper, in English. "To some he grants cunning, and on others he bestows the gift of manhood! It is humbling, and it is afflicting, to see so noble a creatur' as this, who has fou't in many a bloody fray, truckling before his superstition like a beggar asking for

the bones you would throw to the dogs. The Lord will forgive me for playing with the ignorance of the savage, for he knows I do it in no mockery of his state, or in idle vaunting of my own; but in order to save mortal life, and to give justice to the wronged, while I defeat the deviltries of the wicked! Teton," speaking again in the language of the listener, "I ask you, is not that a wonderful medicine? If the Dahcotahs are wise, they will not breathe the air he breathes, nor touch his robes. They know, that the Wahconshecheh (bad spirit), loves his own children, and will not turn his back on him that does them harm."

The old man delivered his opinion in an ominous and sententious manner, and then rode apart, as if he had said enough. The result justified his expectations. The warrior to whom he had addressed himself, was not slow to com-

municate his important knowledge to the rest of the rear-guard; and in a very few moments the naturalist was the object of general observation and reverence. The trapper, who understood that the natives often worshipped, with a view to propitiate the evil spirit, awaited the workings of his artifice, with the coolness of one who had not the smallest interest in its effects. It was not long before he saw one dark figure after another, lashing his horse and galloping a-head into the centre of the band, until Weucha alone remained nigh the persons of himself and Obed. The very dulness of this grovelling-minded savage, who continued gazing at the supposed conjuror, with a sort of stupid admiration, opposed now the only obstacle to the complete success of his artifice.

Thoroughly understanding the character of this Indian, the old man lost no

time in getting rid of him also. Riding to his side, he said, in an affected whisper—

"Has Weucha drunk of the milk of the Big-knives to day?"

"Hugh!" exclaimed the surprised savage, every dull thought being instantly recalled from heaven to earth by the question—

"Because the great captain of my people, who rides in front, has a cow that is never empty. I know it will not be long before he will say, Are any of my red brethren dry?"

The words were scarcely uttered, before Weucha, in his turn, quickened the gait of his beast, and was soon blended with the rest of the dark group, who were riding at a more moderate pace, a few rods in advance. The trapper, who knew how fickle and sudden were the changes of a savage mind, did not lose a moment in profiting by this advantage. He loosened the reins of his own impa-

tient steed, and in an instant he was again at the side of Obed.

"Do you see the twinkling star, that is, may be, the length of four rifles above the prairie; hereaway, to the North, I mean?"

"Ay, it is of the constellation—"

"A tut for your constellations, man! Do you see the star I mean? Tell me in the English of the land, yes or no."

"Yes."

"The moment my back is turned, pull upon the rein of your ass, until you lose sight of the savages. Then take the Lord for your dependence, and yonder star for your guide. Turn neither to the right nor to the left; but make diligent use of your time, for your beast is not quick of foot, and every inch of prairie you gain, is a day added to your liberty or to your life."

Without waiting to listen to the queries which the naturalist was about to put, the old man again loosened the

reins of his horse, and presently he too was blended with the group in front.

Obed was now alone. Asinus willingly obeyed the hint which his master soon gave, rather in desperation than with any very collected understanding of the orders he had received, and checked his pace accordingly. As the Tetons, however, rode at a hard gallop, but a moment of time was necessary, after the ass began to walk, to remove them effectually from before the vision of his rider. Without plan, expectation, or hope of any sort, except that of escaping from his dangerous neighbours, the Doctor, first feeling, to assure himself that the package, which contained the miserable remnants of his specimens and notes, was safe at his crupper, turned the head of the beast in the required direction; and, kicking him with a species of fury, he soon succeeded in exciting the speed of the patient animal into a smart run. He had barely time

to descend into a hollow, and ascend the adjoining swell of the prairie, before he heard, or fancied he heard, his name shouted in good English from the throats of twenty Tetons. The delusion gave a new impulse to his ardour, and no professor of the saltant art ever applied himself with greater industry than the naturalist now used his heels on the ribs of Asinus. The conflict endured for several minutes without interruption, and, to all appearances, it might have continued to the present moment, had not the meek temper of the beast also become unduly excited. Borrowing an idea from the manner in which his master exhibited his agitation, Asinus so far changed the application of his own heels, as to raise them simultaneously, with a certain indignant flourish, into the air; a measure that instantly decided the controversy in his favour. Obed took leave of his seat, as of a position no longer tenable, continuing, however, the

direction of his flight; while the ass, like a conqueror, took possession of the field of battle, beginning to crop the dry herbage, as the fruits of his victory.

When Doctor Battius had recovered his feet, and rallied his faculties, which were in a good deal of disorder, from the hurried manner in which he had abandoned his former situation, he returned in quest of his specimens and of his ass. Asinus displayed enough of magnanimity to render the interview amicable; and thenceforth the naturalist continued the required route with very commendable industry, but with a much more tempered discretion.

In the mean time, the old trapper had not lost sight of the important movements that he had undertaken to controul. Obed had not been mistaken in supposing that he was already missed and sought, though his imagination had corrupted certain savage cries into the

well-known sounds that composed his own latinized name. The truth was simply this: the warriors of the rear-guard had not failed to apprise those in front of the mysterious character with which it had pleased the trapper to invest the unsuspecting naturalist. The same untutored admiration which, on the receipt of this intelligence, had driven those in the rear to the front, now drove many of the front to the rear. The Doctor was, of course, absent, and the outcry was no more than the wild yells which were raised in the first burst of savage disappointment.

But the authority of Mahtoree was prompt to aid the ingenuity of the trapper, in suppressing these dangerous sounds. When order was restored, and the former was made acquainted with the reason why his young men had betrayed so strong a mark of indiscretion, the old man, who had taken a post

at his elbow, saw, with alarm, the gleam of keen distrust that flashed into his swarthy visage.

"Where is your conjuror?" demanded the chief, turning suddenly to the trapper, as if he meant to make him responsible for the re-appearance of Obed.

"Can I tell my brother the number of the stars? The ways of a great medicine are not like the ways of other men."

"Listen to me, grey-head, and count my words," continued the other, bending on his rude saddle-bow, like some chevalier of a more civilized race, and speaking in the haughty tones of absolute power; "the Dahcotahs have not chosen a woman for their chief: when Mahtoree feels the power of a great medicine, he will tremble; until then he will look with his own eyes, without borrowing sight from a Pale-face. If your conjuror is not with his friends in

the morning, my young men shall look for him. Your ears are open. Enough."

The trapper was not sorry to find that so long a respite was granted. He had before found reason to believe that the Teton partisan was one of those bold spirits who overstep the limits which use and education fix to the opinions of man in every state of society; and he now saw plainly that he must adopt some artifice to deceive him, different from that which had succeeded so well with his followers. The sudden appearance of the rock, however, which hove up a bleak and ragged mass out of the darkness a-head, put an end, for the present, to the discourse, Mahtoree giving all his thoughts to the execution of his designs on the rest of the squatter's moveables. A murmur ran through the band, as each dark warrior caught a glimpse of the desired haven, after which the nicest ear might have listened

in vain to catch a sound louder than the rustling of feet among the tall grass of the prairie.

But the vigilance of Esther was not easily deceived. She had long listened anxiously to the suspicious sounds, which approached the rock across the naked waste; nor had the sudden outcry been unheard by the unwearied sentinels of the rock. The savages, who had dismounted at some little distance, had not time to draw around the base of the hill, in their customary silent and insidious manner, before the voice of the Amazon was raised in the stillness of the place, fearlessly demanding—

"Who is beneath? Answer for your lives? Siouxes or devils, I fear ye not!"

No answer was given to this challenge, every warrior halting where he stood, confident that his dusky form was blended with the shadows of the plain. It was at this moment that the trapper

determined to escape. He had been left with the rest of his friends, under the surveillance of those who were assigned to the duty of watching the horses, and as they all continued mounted, the moment appeared favourable to his project. The attention of the guards was drawn to the rock, and a heavy cloud driving above them at that instant, obscured even the feeble light which fell from the stars. Leaning on the neck of his horse, the old man muttered—

"Where is my pup? Where is it—Hector—where is it, dog?"

The hound caught the well-known sounds, and answered by a whine of friendship, which threatened to break out into one of his piercing howls. The trapper was in the act of raising himself from this successful exploit, when he felt the hand of Weucha grasping his throat, as if determined to suppress his voice by the very unequivocal process of strangulation. Profiting by the cir-

cumstance, he raised another low sound, as in the natural effort of breathing, which drew a second responsive cry from the faithful hound. Weucha instantly abandoned his hold of the master in order to wreak his vengeance on the dog. But the voice of Esther was again heard, and every other design was abandoned in order to listen.

"Ay, whine and deform your throats as ye may, ye imps of darkness," she said, with a cracked but scornful laugh: "I know ye; tarry, and ye shall have light for your misdeeds. Put in the coal, Phœbe, put in the coal; your father and the boys shall see that they are wanted at home to welcome their guests."

Even as she spoke, a strong light, like that of a brilliant star, was seen on the very pinnacle of the rock; and then followed a forked flame, which curled for a moment amid the windings of an enormous pile of brush, and flashing

upward in an united sheet, it wavered to and fro in the passing air, shedding a bright glare on every object within its influence. A taunting laugh was heard from the height, in which the voices of all ages mingled, as though they triumphed at having so successfully exposed the treacherous intentions of the Tetons.

The trapper looked about him to ascertain in what situations he might find his friends. True to the signals, Middleton and Paul had drawn a little apart, and now stood ready, by every appearance, to commence their flight at the third repetition of the cry. Hector had escaped his savage pursuer, and was again crouching at the heels of his master's horse. But the broad circle of light was gradually increasing in extent and power, and the old man, whose eye and judgment so rarely failed him, patiently awaited a more propitious moment for his enterprise.

"Now, Ishmael, my man, if sight and hand ar' true as ever, now is the time to work upon these Red-skins, who claim to own all your property, even to wife and children! Now, my good man, prove both breed and character!"

A distant shout was heard in the direction of the approaching party of the squatter, assuring the female garrison that succour was not far distant. Esther answered to the grateful sounds by a cracked cry of her own, lifting her form, in the first burst of exultation, above the rock in a manner to be visible to all below. Not content with this dangerous exposure of her person, she was in the act of tossing her arms in triumph, when the dark figure of Mahtoree shot into the light, and pinioned them to her side. The forms of three other warriors glided across the top of the rock, looking like naked demons flitting among the clouds. The air was filled with the brands of the beacon,

and then a heavy darkness succeeded, not unlike that of the appalling instant, when the last rays of the sun are excluded by the intervening mass of the moon. A yell of triumph burst from the savages in their turn, and was rather accompanied than followed, by a long, loud whine from Hector.

In an instant the old man was between the horses of Middleton and Paul, extending a hand to the bridle of each, in order to check the impatience of their riders.

"Softly! softly!" he whispered, "their eyes are as marvellously shut for the minute, as though the Lord had stricken them blind; but their ears are open. Softly, softly; for fifty rods, at least, we must move no faster than a walk."

The five minutes of doubt that succeeded, appeared like an age to all but the trapper. As their sight was gradually restored, it seemed to each as if the

momentary gloom, which followed the extinction of the beacon, was to be replaced by as broad a light as that of noon-day. Gradually the old man, however, suffered the animals to quicken their steps, until they had gained the centre of one of the prairie bottoms. Then laughing, in his quiet manner, he released the reins and said—

"Now, let them give play to their legs; but keep on the old fog to deaden the sounds."

It is needless to say how cheerfully he was obeyed. In a few more minutes they ascended and crossed a swell of the land, after which the flight was continued at the top of their horses' speed, keeping the indicated star in view, as the labouring bark steers for the light which points the way to a haven and security.

CHAPTER XI.

The clouds and sunbeams o'er his eye
That once their shades and glories threw,
Have left, in yonder silent sky,
No vestige where they flew.

MONTGOMERY.

A STILLNESS, as deep as that which marked the gloomy wastes in their front, was observed by the fugitives, to distinguish the spot they had just abandoned. Even the trapper lent his practised faculties, in vain, to detect any of the well-known signs, which might establish the important fact, that hostilities had actually commenced between the parties of Mahtoree and Ishmael; but their horses carried them out of the reach of sounds, without the occurrence of the smallest evidence

of the sort. The old man, from time to time, muttered his discontent, but manifested the uneasiness he actually entertained in no other manner, unless it might be in exhibiting a growing anxiety to urge the animals to increase their speed. He had pointed out, in passing, that deserted swale, where the family of the squatter had encamped, the night they were introduced to the reader, and afterwards he maintained an ominous silence; ominous, because his companions had already seen enough of his character to be convinced, that the circumstances must be critical indeed, which possessed the power to disturb the well regulated tranquillity of the old man's mind.

"Have we not done enough?" Middleton demanded, in tenderness to the inability of Inez and Ellen to endure so much fatigue, at the end of some hours; "we have ridden hard, and have crossed

a wide tract of plain. It is time to seek a place of rest."

"You must seek it then in Heaven, if you find yourselves unequal to a longer march," murmured the old trapper. "Had the Tetons and the squatter come to blows, as any one might see in the natur' of things they were bound to do, there would be time to look about us, and to calculate not only the chances but the comforts of the journey; but as the case actually is, I should consider it certain death, or endless captivity, to trust our eyes with sleep, until our heads are fairly hid in some uncommon cover."

"I know not," returned the impatient youth, who reflected more on the sufferings of the fragile being he supported, than on the experience of his companion—"I know not; we have ridden leagues, and I can see no extraordinary signs of danger—if you fear for

yourself, my good friend, believe me you are wrong, for—"

"Your gran'ther, were he living and here," interrupted the old man, stretching forth a hand, and laying a finger impressively on the arm of Middleton, "would have spared those words. He had some reason to think that, in the prime of my days, when my eye was quicker than the hawk's, and my limbs were as active as the legs of the fallow-deer, I never clung too eagerly and fondly to life; then why should I now feel such a childish affection for a thing that I know to be vain, and the companion of pain and sorrow? Let the Tetons do their worst; they will not find a miserable and worn out trapper the loudest in his complaints or his prayers."

"Pardon me, my worthy, my inestimable friend," exclaimed the repentant young man, warmly grasping the hand, which the other was in the act of withdrawing; "I knew not what I said—

or rather I thought only of those whose tenderness we are most bound to consider."

"Enough! It is natur', and it is right. Therein your grand'ther would have done the very same. Ah's me! what a number of seasons, hot and cold, wet and dry, have rolled over my poor head, since the time we worried it out together among the Red Hurons of the Lakes, back in those rugged mountains of old York! And many a noble buck has since that day fallen by my hand; ay, and many a thieving Mingo, too! Tell me, lad, did the general, for general I know he got to be, did he ever tell you of the deer we took, that night the outlyers of the accursed tribe drove us to the caves, on the island, and how we feasted and drunk in security?"

"I have often heard him mention the smallest circumstance of the night you mean; but—"

"And the singer; and his open

throat; and his shoutings in the fights!" continued the old man, laughing most joyously at the strength of his own recollections.

"All—all—he forgot nothing, even to the most trifling incident. Do you not—"

"What, did he tell you of the imp behind the log—and of the miserable devil who went over the fall—or of the wretch in the tree?"

"Of each and all, with every thing that concerned them. I should think—"

"Ay," continued the old man, in a voice, which betrayed how powerfully his own faculties retained the impression of the spectacle, "I have been a dweller in forests and in the wilderness for threescore and ten years, and if any can pretend to know the world, or to have seen scary sights, it is myself! But never, before nor since, have I seen human man in such a state of mortal despair as that very savage; and yet he scorned

to speak, or to cry out, or to own his forlorn condition! It is their gift, and nobly did he maintain it!"

"Harkee, old trapper," interrupted Paul, who, content with the knowledge that his waist was grasped by one of the pretty arms of Ellen, had hitherto ridden in unusual silence; "my eyes are as true and as delicate as a humming-bird's in the day; but they are nothing worth boasting of by star-light. Is that a sick buffalo, crawling along in the bottom, there, or is it one of the stray cattle of the savages?"

The whole party drew up, in order to examine the object which Paul had pointed out. During most of the time, they had ridden in the little vales in order to seek the protection of the shadows, but just at that moment they had ascended a roll of the prairie in order to cross into the very bottom where this unknown animal was now seen.

"Let us descend," said Middleton; "be it a beast or a man, we are too strong to have any cause of fear."

"Now, if the thing was not morally impossible," cried the trapper, who, the reader must have already discovered, was not always exact in the use of qualifying words—"if the thing was not morally impossible, I should say that was the man who journeys in search of reptiles and insects: our fellow-traveller, the Doctor."

"Why, impossible? Did you not direct him to pursue this course, in order to rejoin us?"

"Ay, but I did not tell him to make an ass outdo the speed of a horse—you are right—you are right," said the trapper, interrupting himself, as, by gradually lessening the distance between them, his eyes assured him it was Obed and Asinus whom he saw; "you are right, as certainly as the thing is a miracle. Lord, what a thing is fear! How now,

friend, you have been industrious to have got so far a-head in so short a time. I marvel at the speed of the ass!"

"Asinus is overcome," returned the naturalist, mournfully. "The animal has certainly not been idle since we separated, but he declines all my admonitions and invitations to proceed. I hope there is no instant fear from the savages?"

"I cannot say that; I cannot say that; matters are not as they should be atween the squatter and the Tetons, nor will I answer as yet for the safety of any scalp among us. The beast is broken down! you have urged him beyond his natural gifts, and he is like a worried hound. There is pity and discretion in all things, even though a man be riding for his life."

"You indicated the star," returned the Doctor, "and I deemed it expedient to use great diligence in pursuing the direction."

"Did you expect to reach it by such haste! Go; go; you talk boldly of the creatur's of the Lord, though I plainly see you are but a child in matters that concern their gifts and instincts. What a plight would you now be in, if there was need for a long and a quick push with our heels."

"The fault exists in the formation of the quadruped," said Obed, whose placid temper began to revolt under so many scandalous imputations. "Had there been rotary levers for two of the members, a moiety of the fatigue would have been saved, for one item—"

"That, for your moieties and rotaries, and items, man; a jaded ass is a jaded ass, and he who denies it is but a brother of the beast itself. Now, captain, are we driven to choose one of two evils. We must either abandon this man, who has been too much with us through good and bad to be easily cast away, or we

must seek a cover to let the animal rest."

"Venerable venator!" exclaimed the alarmed Obed; "I conjure you, by all the secret sympathies of our common nature, by all the hidden—"

"Ah, fear has brought him to talk a little rational sense! It is not natur', truly, to abandon a brother in distress; and the Lord he knows that I have never yet done the shameful deed. You are right, friend, you are right; we must all be hidden, and that speedily. But what to do with the ass! Friend Doctor, do you truly value the life of the creatur'?"

"He is an ancient and faithful servant," returned the disconsolate Obed, "and with pain should I see him come to any harm. Fetter his lower limbs, and leave him to repose in this bed of herbage. I will engage he shall be found where he is left, in the morning."

"And the Siouxes! What would become of the beast, should any of the red imps catch a peep at his ears, growing up out of the grass like two mullein-tops?" cried the bee-hunter. "They would stick him as full of arrows, as a woman's cushion is full of pins, and then believe they had done the job for the father of all rabbits! My word for it, but they would find out their blunder at the first mouthful!"

Middleton, who began to grow impatient under the protracted discussion, now interposed; and, as a good deal of deference was paid to his superior rank, he quickly prevailed in his efforts to effect a sort of compromise. The humble Asinus, too weak and too weary to make any resistance, was soon tethered and deposited in his bed of dying grass, where he was left with a perfect confidence on the part of his master of finding him again, at the expiration of a few hours. The old man strongly remon-

strated against this arrangement, and more than once hinted that the knife was much more certain than the tether, but the petitions of Obed, aided, perhaps, by the secret reluctance of the trapper to destroy the beast, were the means of saving its life. When Asinus was thus secured, and, as his master believed, secreted, the whole party proceeded to find some place where they might rest themselves during the time required for the repose of the animal.

According to the calculations of the trapper, they had ridden twenty miles since the commencement of their flight. The delicate frame of Inez began to droop under the excessive fatigue, nor was the more robust, but still feminine person of Ellen, insensible to the extraordinary effort she had made. Middleton himself was not sorry to repose, nor did the vigorous and high-spirited Paul hesitate to confess that he should be all the better for a little rest. The old man

alone seemed indifferent to the usual claims of nature. Although but little accustomed to the unusual description of exercise he had just been taking, he appeared to bid defiance to all the usual attacks of human infirmities. Though evidently so near its dissolution, his attenuated frame still stood like the shaft of seasoned oak, dry, naked, and tempest-riven, but unbending, and apparently indurated to the consistency of stone. On the present occasion he conducted the search for a resting-place, which was immediately commenced, with all the energy of youth, tempered by the discretion and experience of his great age.

The bed of grass, in which the Doctor had been met, and in which his ass had just been left, was followed a little distance, until it was found that the rolling swells of the prairie were melting away into one vast level plain, that was

covered for miles on miles, with the same species of herbage.

"Ah, this may do, this may do," said the old man, when they arrived on the borders of this sea of withered grass; "I know the spot, and often have I lain in its secret holes, for days at a time, while the savages have been hunting the buffalos on the open ground. We must enter it with great care, for a broad trail might be seen, and Indian curiosity is a dangerous neighbour."

Leading the way himself, he selected a spot where the tall, coarse herbage stood most erect, growing not unlike a bed of reeds both in height and density. Here he entered, singly, directing the others to follow as nearly as possible in his own footsteps. When they had passed for some hundred or two feet into the wilderness of weeds, he gave his directions to Paul and Middleton, who continued a direct route deeper

into the place, while he dismounted and returned on his tracks to the margin of the meadow. Here he passed many minutes in replacing the trodden grass, and in effacing, as far as possible, every evidence of their passage.

In the mean time the rest of the party continued their progress, not without toil, and consequently at a very moderate gait, until they had penetrated a mile into the place. Here they found a spot suited to their circumstances, and, dismounting, they began to make their dispositions to pass the remainder of the night. By this time the trapper had rejoined the party, and again resumed the direction of their proceedings.

The weeds and grass were soon plucked and cut from an area of sufficient extent, and a bed for Inez and Ellen was speedily made, a little apart, which for sweetness and ease, might have rivalled one of down. The exhausted females, after receiving some

light refreshments from the provident stores of Paul and the old man, now sought their repose, leaving their more stout companions at liberty to provide for their own necessities. Middleton and Paul were not long in following the example of their betrothed, leaving the trapper and the naturalist still seated around a savoury dish of bison's meat, which had been cooked at a previous halt, and which was, as usual, eaten cold.

A certain lingering sensation, which had so long been uppermost in the mind of Obed, temporarily banished sleep; and as for the old man, his wants were rendered, by habit and necessity, as seemingly subject to his will as though they altogether depended on the pleasure of the moment. Like his companion, he chose therefore to watch, instead of sleeping.

"If the children of ease and security knew the hardships and dangers

the students of nature encounter in their behalf," said Obed, after a moment of silence, when Middleton took his leave for the night, "pillars of silver and statues of brass would be reared as the everlasting monuments of their glory!"

"I know not, I know not," returned his companion; "silver is far from plenty, at least in the wilderness, and your brazen idols are forbidden in the commandments of the Lord."

"Such, indeed, was the opinion of the great law-giver of the Jews, but the Egyptians and the Chaldeans, the Greeks and the Romans, were wont to manifest their gratitude in these types of the human form. Indeed, many of the illustrious masters of antiquity, have, by the aid of science and skill, even outdone the works of nature, and exhibited a beauty and perfection in the human form that are difficult to be found in the rarest living specimens of any of the species; *genus* homo."

"Can your idols walk or speak, or have they the glorious gift of reason!" demanded the trapper, with some indignation in his voice; "though but little given to run into the noise and chatter of the settlements, yet have I been into the towns in my day, to barter the peltry for lead and powder, and often have I seen your waxen dolls, with their tawdry clothes and glass eyes."

"Waxen dolls!" interrupted Obed; "it is profanation in the view of the arts, to liken the miserable handy-work of the dealers in wax to the pure models of antiquity!"

"It is profanation in the eyes of the Lord," retorted the old man, "to liken the works of his creatur's to the power of his own hand."

"Venerable venator," resumed the naturalist, clearing his throat, like one who was much in earnest, "let us discuss understandingly and in amity. You speak of the dross of ignorance,

whereas my memory dwells on those precious jewels, which it was my happy fortune formerly to witness among the treasured glories of the Old World."

"*Old* World!" retorted the trapper, "that is the miserable cry of all the half-starved miscreants that have come into this blessed land, since the days of my boyhood! They tell you of the *Old* World; as if the Lord had not the power and the will to create the universe in a day, or as if he had not bestowed his gifts with an equal hand, though not with an equal mind or equal wisdom have they been received and used. Were they to say a *worn* out, and an *abused*, and a *sacrilegious* world, they might not be so far from the truth!"

Doctor Battius, who found it quite as arduous a task to maintain any of his favourite positions with so irregular an antagonist, as he would have found it difficult to keep his feet within the hug of a western wrestler, hemmed aloud,

and profited by the new opening the trapper had made, to shift the grounds of the discussion—

"By Old and New World, my excellent associate," he said, "it is not to be understood that the hills and the vallies, the rocks and the rivers of our own moiety of the earth do not, physically speaking, bear a date as ancient as the spot on which the bricks of Babylon are found; it merely signifies that its moral existence is not co-equal with its physical or geological formation."

"Anan!" said the old man, looking up inquiringly into the face of the philosopher.

"Merely that it has not been so long known in morals as the other countries of Christendom."

"So much the better, so much the better. I am no great admirator of your old morals, as you call them; for I have ever found, and I have liv'd long as it were in the very heart of natur', that

your old morals are none of the best. Mankind twist and turn the rules of the Lord, to suit their own wickedness, when their devilish cunning has had too much time to trifle with his commands."

"Nay, venerable hunter, still am I not comprehended. By morals I do not mean the limited and literal signification of the term, such as is conveyed in its synonyme, morality, but the practices of men as connected with their daily intercourse, their institutions, and their laws."

"And such I call barefaced and downright wantonness and waste," interrupted his sturdy disputant.

"Well, be it so," returned the Doctor, abandoning the explanation in despair. "Perhaps I have conceded too much," he then instantly added, fancying that he still saw the glimmerings of an argument through another chink in the discourse—"perhaps I have conceded too much in saying that this hemisphere is literally as old, in its formation, as that

which embraces the venerable quarters of Europe, Asia, and Africa."

"It is easy to say an alder is not so tall as a pine, but it would be hard to prove. Can you give a reason for such a wicked belief?"

"The reasons are numerous and powerful," returned the Doctor, delighted by this encouraging opening. "Look into the plains of Egypt and Araby; their sandy deserts teem with the monuments of their antiquity; and then we have also recorded documents of their glory, doubling the proofs of their former greatness, now that they lie stripped of their fertility; while we look in vain for similar evidences that man has ever reached the summit of civilization on this continent, or search without our reward, for the path by which he has made the downward journey to his present condition of second childhood."

"And what see you in all this?" demanded the trapper, who, though a

little confused by the terms of his companion, had seized the thread of his ideas.

"A demonstration of my problem, that nature did not make such a vast region to lie an uninhabited waste so many ages. This is merely the moral view of the subject; as to the more exact and geological—"

"Your morals are exact enough for me," returned the grave old man, "for I think I see in them the very *pride* of *folly*. I am but little gifted in the fables of what you call the *Old* World, seeing that my time has been mainly passed, looking natur' steadily in the face, and in reasoning on what I've seen, rather than on what I've heard in traditions. But I have never shut my ears to the words of the good book; and many is the long winter evening that I have passed in the wigwams of the Delawares, listening to the good Moravians, as they dealt forth the history and doc-

trines of the elder times, to the people of the Lenape! It was pleasant to hearken to such wisdom after a weary hunt! Right pleasant did I find it; and often have I talked the matter over with the Great Serpent of the Delawares, in the more peaceful hours of our out-lyings, whether it might be on the trail of a war-party of the Mingoes, or on the watch for a York deer. I remember to have heard it then and there said, that the Blessed Land was once fertile as the bottoms of the Mississipi, and groaning with its stores of grain and fruits; but that the judgment has since fallen upon it, and that it is now more remarkable for its barrenness, than any qualities to boast of."

"It is true; but Egypt—nay much of Africa, furnishes still more striking proofs of this exhaustion of nature."

"Tell me," interrupted the old man, "is it a certain truth that buildings are still standing in that land of Pharoah,

which may be likened in their stature to the hills of the 'arth?"

"It is as true, as that nature never refuses to bestow her incisores on the *animals*, mammalia; *genus*, homo;—"

"It is very marvellous! and it proves how great He must be, when his miserable creatur's can accomplish such wonders! Many men must have been needed to finish such an edifice; ay, and men gifted with strength and skill too! Does the land abound with such a race to this hour?"

"Far from it. Most of the country is a desert, and but for a mighty river all would be so."

"Yes; rivers are rare gifts to such as till the ground; as any one may see, who journeys far atween the Rocky Mountains and the Mississipi. But how do you account for these changes on the face of the 'arth itself, and for this downfall of nations, you men of the schools?"

"It is to be ascribed to moral cau—"

"You're right—it is their morals! their wickedness and their pride, and chiefly their waste that has done it all! Now listen to what the experience of an old man teaches him. I have lived long, as these grey hairs and wrinkled hands will show, even though my tongue should fail in the wisdom of my years. And I have seen much of the folly of man; for his natur' is the same, be he born in the wilderness, or be he born in the towns. To my weak judgment it hath ever seemed as though his gifts are not equal to his wishes. That he would mount into the heavens, with all his deformities about him, if he only knew the road, no one will gainsay, that witnesses his bitter strivings upon 'arth. If his power is not equal to his will, it is because the wisdom of the Lord hath set bounds to his evil workings."

"It is much too certain that certain facts will warrant a theory, which

teaches the natural depravity of the *genus*; but if science could be fairly brought to bear on a whole species at once, for instance, education might eradicate the evil principle."

"That, for your education! The time has been, when I have thought it possible to make a companion of a beast. Many are the cubs, and many are the speckled fawns, that I have reared with these old hands, until I have even fancied them rational and altered beings—but what did it amount to! the bear would bite, and the deer would run, notwithstanding my wicked conceit, in fancying I could change a temper that the Lord himself had seen fit to bestow. Now if man is so blinded in his folly, as to go on, ages on ages, doing harm chiefly to himself, there is the same reason to think that he has wrought his evil here, as in the countries you call so old. Look about you, man; where are the multitudes that once peopled these

prairies; the kings and the palaces, the riches and the mightinesses of this desert?"

"Where are the monuments that would prove the truth of so vague a theory?"

"I know not what you call a monument."

"The works of man! The glories of Thebes and Balbec—columns, catacombs, and pyramids! standing amid the sands of the East, like wrecks on a rocky shore, to testify to the storms of ages!"

"They are gone. Time has lasted too long for them. For why? Time was made by the Lord, and they were made by man. This very spot of reeds and grass, on which you now sit, may once have been the garden of some mighty king. It is the fate of all things to ripen, and then to decay. The tree blossoms, and bears its fruit, which falls, rots, withers, and even the seed is lost! Go, count the rings of the oak and of the

sycamore; they lie in circles, one about another, until the eye is blinded in striving to make out their numbers; and yet a full change of the seasons comes round, while the stem is winding one of these little lines about itself, like the buffalo changing his coat or the buck his horns; and what does it all amount to! There does the noble tree fill its place in the forest, far loftier, and grander, and richer, and more difficult to imitate than any of your pitiful pillars, for a thousand years, until the time which the Lord hath given it is full. Then come the winds, that you cannot see, to rive its bark; and the waters from the heavens, to soften its pores; and the rot, which all can feel and none can understand, to humble its pride and bring it to the ground. From that moment its beauty begins to perish. It lies another hundred years, a mouldering log, and then a mound of moss and 'arth; a sad effigy of a human

grave. This is one of your genuine monuments, though made by a very different power than such as belongs to your chiselling masonry! and after all, the cunningest scout of the whole Dahcotah nation, might pass his life in searching for the spot where it fell, and be no wiser when his eyes grew dim, than when they were first opened. As if that was not enough to convince man of his ignorance, and as though it were put there in mockery of his conceit, a pine shoots up from the roots of the oak, just as barrenness comes after fertility, or as these wastes have been spread where a garden may have been created. Tell me not of your worlds that are old! it is blasphemous to set bounds and seasons in this manner to the works of the Almighty, like a woman counting the ages of her young."

"Friend hunter, or trapper," returned the naturalist, clearing his throat in some intellectual confusion at the vigor-

ous attack of his companion, "your deductions, if admitted by the world, would sadly circumscribe the efforts of reason and abridge the boundaries of knowledge."

"So much the better—so much the better; for I have always found that a conceited man never knows content. All things prove it. Why have we not the wings of the pigeon, the eyes of the eagle, and the legs of the moose, if it had been intended that man should be equal to all his wishes?"

"There are certain physical defects, venerable trapper, in which I am always ready to admit great and happy alterations might be suggested. For example, in my own order of Phalangacru—"

"Cruel enough would be the order, that should come from miserable hands like thine! A touch from such a finger would destroy the mocking deformity of a monkey! Go, go; human folly is

not needed to fill up the great design of God. There is no stature, no beauty, no proportions, nor any colours in which man himself can well be fashioned, that is not already done to his hands."

"That is touching another great and much disputed question," exclaimed the Doctor, who seized upon every distinct idea that the ardent and somewhat dogmatic old man left exposed to his mental grasp, with the vain hope of inducing a logical discussion, in which he might bring his battery of syllogisms to annihilate the unscientific defences of his antagonist.

It is, however, unnecessary to our narrative to relate the erratic discourse that ensued. The old man eluded the annihilating blows of his adversary, as the light-armed soldier is wont to escape the efforts of the more regular warrior, even while he annoys him most, and an hour passed away without bringing any of the numerous subjects, on which they

touched, to a satisfactory conclusion. The arguments acted, however, on the nervous system of the Doctor, like so many soothing soporifics, and by the time his aged companion was disposed to lay his head on his pack, Obed, vastly refreshed by his recent mental joust, was in a condition to seek his natural rest, without enduring the torments of the incubus, in the shapes of Teton warriors and bloody tomahawks.

CHAPTER XII.

—Save you, sir.
SHAKSPEARE.

THE sleep of the fugitives lasted for several hours. The trapper was the first to shake off its influence, as he had been the last to court its refreshment. Rising just as the gray light of day began to brighten that portion of the studded vault which rested on the eastern margin of the plain, he summoned his companions from their warm lairs, and pointed out the necessity of their being once more on the alert. While Middleton attended to the arrangements necessary to the comforts of Inez and Ellen,

in the long and painful journey which lay before them, the old man and Paul prepared the meal, which the former had advised them to take before they proceeded to horse. These several dispositions were not long in making, and the little group was soon seated about a repast which, though it might want the elegancies to which the bride of Middleton had been accustomed, was not deficient in the more important requisites of savour and nutriment.

"When we get lower into the hunting grounds of the Pawnees," said the trapper, laying a morsel of delicate venison before Inez, on a little trencher neatly made of horn, and expressly for his own use, "we shall find the buffalos fatter and sweeter, the deer in more abundance, and all the gifts of the Lord abounding to satisfy our wants. Perhaps we may even strike a beaver, and get a morsel from his tail by way of a rare mouthful."

"What course do you mean to pursue when you have once thrown these blood-hounds from the chase?" demanded Middleton.

"If I might advise," cried Paul, "it would be to strike a water-course, and get upon its downward current as soon as may be. Give me a cotton-wood, and I will turn you out a canoe that [illegible] carry us all, the jackass excepte[illegible] perhaps the work of a day and a [illegible] Ellen, here, is a lively girl enough, but then she is no great race-rider; and it would be far more comfortable to boat six or eight hundred miles, than to go loping along like so many elks measuring the prairies; besides, water leaves no trail."

"I will not swear to that," returned the trapper; "I have often thought the eyes of a Red-skin would find a trail in air."

"See, Middleton," exclaimed Inez, in a sudden burst of youthful pleasure

that caused her for a moment to forget her situation—"how lovely is that sky! Surely it contains a promise of happier times!"

"It is glorious!" returned her husband. "Glorious and heavenly is that streak of vivid red, and here is a still brighter crimson—rarely have I seen a richer ... of the sun."

"...ising of the sun!" slowly repeated ...d man, lifting his tall person from its seat, with a deliberate and abstracted air, while he kept his eye rivetted on the changing, and certainly beautiful tints, that were garnishing the vault of Heaven. "Rising of the sun! I like not such risings of the sun. Ah's me! the imps have circumvented us with a vengeance. The prairie is on fire!"

"God in heaven protect us!" cried Middleton, catching Inez to his bosom, under the instant impression of the imminence of their danger. "There is n

no time to lose, old man; each instant is a day; let us fly!"

"Whither?" demanded the trapper, motioning him with calmness and dignity, to arrest his steps. "In this wilderness of grass and reeds, you are like a vessel in the broad lakes without a compass. A single step on the wrong course might prove the destruction of us all. It is seldom danger is so pressing that there is not time enough for reason to do its work, young officer, therefore let us await its biddings."

"For my own part," said Paul Hover, looking about him with no unequivocal expression of concern, "I acknowledge, that should this dry bed of weeds get fairly in a flame, a bee would have to make a flight higher than common to prevent his wings from scorching. Therefore, old trapper, I agree with the captain, and say, mount and run."

"Ye are wrong—ye are wrong—man

is not a beast to follow the gift of instinct, and to snuff up his knowledge by a taint in the air, or a rumbling in the sound; but he must see and reason, and then conclude. So follow me a little to the left, where there is a rise in the ground, whence we may make our reconnoitrings."

The old man waved his hand with authority, and led the way without further parlance to the spot he had indicated, followed by the whole of his alarmed companions. An eye less practised than that of the trapper might have failed in discovering the gentle elevation to which he alluded, and which looked on the surface of the meadow like a growth a little taller than common. When they reached the place, however, the stinted grass itself announced the absence of that moisture which had fed the rank weeds of most of the plain, and furnished a clue to the evidence by which he had judged of the formation of

the ground hidden beneath. Here a few minutes were lost in breaking down the tops of the surrounding herbage, which, notwithstanding the advantage of their position, rose even above the heads of Middleton and Paul, and in obtaining a look-out that might command a view of the surrounding sea of fire.

The frightful prospect added nothing to the hopes of those who had such a fearful stake in the result. Although the day was beginning to dawn, the vivid colours of the sky continued to deepen, as if the fierce element were bent on an impious rivalry of the light of the sun. Bright flashes of flame shot up here and there, along the margin of the waste, like the nimble corruscations of the North, but far more angry and threatening in their colour and changes. The anxiety on the rigid features of the trapper, sensibly deepened as he leisurely traced these evidences of a conflagration, which spread in a broad

belt about their place of refuge, until he had encircled the whole horizon.

Shaking his head, as he again turned his face to the point where the danger seemed nighest and most rapidly approaching, the old man said—

"Now have we been cheating ourselves with the belief that we had thrown these Tetons from our trail, while here is proof enough that they not only know where we lie, but that they intend to smoke us out like so many skulking beasts of prey. See! they have lighted the fire around the whole bottom at the same moment, and we are as completely hemmed in by the devils as an island by its waters."

"Let us mount and ride," cried Middleton; "is life not worth a struggle!"

"Whither would ye go? Is a Teton horse a salamander, that can walk amid fiery flames unhurt? or, do you think the Lord will show his might in your behalf, as in the days of old, and carry

you harmless through such a furnace as you may see glowing beneath yonder red sky? There are Siouxes, too, hemming the fire with their arrows and knives, on every side of us, or I am no judge of their murderous deviltries."

"We will ride into the centre of the whole tribe," returned the youth fiercely, "and put their manhood to the test."

"Ay, it's well in words, but what would it prove in deeds? Here is a dealer in bees, who can teach you wisdom in a matter like this."

"Now for that matter, old trapper," said Paul, stretching his athletic form like a mastiff conscious of his strength, "I am on the side of the captain, and am clearly for a race against the fire, though it line me into a Teton wigwam. Here is Ellen who will—"

"Of what use, of what use are your stout hearts, when the element of the Lord is to be conquered, as well as human men? Look about you, friends:

the wreath of smoke, that is rising from the bottoms, plainly says that there is no outlet from the spot, without crossing a belt of fire. Look for yourselves, my men; look for yourselves; and if you can find a single opening, I will engage to follow."

The examination, which his companions so instantly and so intently made, rather served to assure them of their desperate situation than to appease their fears. Huge columns of smoke were rolling up from the plain, and thickening in gloomy masses around the horizon. The red glow, which gleamed upon their enormous folds, now lighting their columns with the glare of the conflagration, and now flashed to another point, as the flame beneath glided ahead, leaving all behind enveloped in awful darkness, and proclaiming louder than words the character of the imminent and rapidly approaching danger.

"This is terrible!" exclaimed Mid-

dleton, folding the trembling Inez to his heart. "At such a time as this, and in such a manner."

"The gates of heaven are open to all who truly believe," murmured the pious devotee in his bosom.

"This resignation is maddening! But we are men, and will make a struggle for our lives! How now, my brave and spirited friend, shall we yet mount and push across the flames, or shall we stand here, and see those we most love perish, in this frightful manner, without an effort?"

"I am for a swarming time, and a flight before the hive is too hot to hold us," said the bee-hunter, to whom it will be at once seen that the half-distracted Middleton addressed himself. "Come, old trapper, you must acknowledge this is but a slow way of getting out of danger. If we tarry here much longer, it will be in the fashion that the bees lie around the straw after the hive has been

smoked for its honey. You may hear the fire begin to roar already, and I know by experience, that when the flame once gets fairly into the prairie grass, it is no sloth that can outrun it."

"Think you," returned the old man, pointing scornfully at the mazes of the dry and matted grass,wh ich environed them, "that mortal feet can outstrip the speed of fire, on such a path! If I only knew now on which side these miscreants lay!—"

"What say you, friend Doctor?" cried the bewildered Paul, turning to the naturalist, with that sort of helplessness with which the strong are often apt to seek aid of the weak, when human power is baffled by the hand of a mightier being—"what say you; have you no advice to give away, in a case of life and death?"

The naturalist stood, tablets in hand, looking at the awful spectacle, with as much composure as though the confla-

gration had been lighted in order to solve the difficulties of some scientific problem. Aroused by the question of his companion, he turned to his equally calm though differently occupied associate the trapper, demanding, with the most provoking insensibility to the urgent nature of their situation—

"Venerable hunter, you have often witnessed similar prismatic experiments—"

He was rudely interrupted by Paul, who struck the tablets from his hands, with a violence that betrayed the utter intellectual confusion which had overset the equanimity of his mind. Before time was allowed for remonstrance, the old man, who had continued during the whole scene like one much at a loss how to proceed, though also like one who was rather perplexed than alarmed, suddenly assumed a decided air, as if he no longer doubted on the course it was most adviseable to pursue.

"It is time to be doing," he said, interrupting the controversy that was about to ensue between the naturalist and the bee-hunter; "it is time to leave off books and moanings, and to be doing."

"You have come to your recollections too late, miserable old man," cried Middleton; "the flames are within a quarter of a mile of us, and the wind is bringing them down in this quarter, with dreadful rapidity."

"Anan! the flames! I care but little for the flames. If I only knew how to circumvent the cunning of the Tetons, as I know how to cheat the fire of its prey, there would be nothing needed but thanks to the Lord for our deliverance. Do you call this a fire! If you had seen, what I have witnessed in the Eastern hills, when mighty mountains were like the furnace of a smith, you would have known what it was to fear the flames and to be thankful that you

were spared! Come, lads, come; 'tis time to be doing now, and to cease talking; for yonder curling flame is truly coming on like a trotting moose. Put hands upon this short and withered grass where we stand, and lay bare the 'arth."

"Would you think to deprive the fire of its victims in this childish manner!" exclaimed Middleton.

A faint but solemn smile passed over the features of the old man as he answered—

"Your grand'ther would have said, that when the enemy was nigh, a soldier could do no better than to obey."

The captain felt the reproof, and instantly began to imitate the industry of Paul, who was tearing the decayed herbage from the ground in a sort of desperate compliance with the trapper's direction. Even Ellen lent her hands to the labour, nor was it long before Inez was seen similarly employed,

though none amongst them knew why or wherefore. When life is thought to be the reward of labour, men are wont to be industrious. A very few moments sufficed to lay bare a spot of some twenty feet in diameter. Into one edge of this little area the trapper brought the females, directing Middleton and Paul to cover their light and inflammable dresses with the blankets of the party. So soon as this precaution was observed, the old man approached the opposite margin of the grass, which still environed them in a tall and dangerous circle, and selecting a handful of the driest of the herbage he placed it over the pan of his rifle. The light combustible kindled at the flash. Then he placed the little flame into a bed of the standing fog, and withdrawing from the spot to the centre of the ring, he patiently awaited the result.

The subtle element seized with avidity upon its new fuel, and in a moment

forked flames were gliding among the grass, as the tongues of ruminating animals are seen rolling among their food, apparently in quest of its sweetest portions.

"Now," said the old man, holding up a finger, and laughing in his peculiarly silent manner, "you shall see fire fight fire! Ah's me! many is the time I have burnt a smootly path, from wanton laziness to pick my way across a tangled bottom."

"But is this not fatal!" cried the amazed Middleton; "are you not bringing the enemy nigher to us instead of avoiding it?"

"Do you scorch so easily? Your grand'ther had a tougher skin. But we shall live to see; we shall all live to see."

The experience of the trapper was in the right. As the fire gained strength and heat it began to spread on three sides, dying of itself on the fourth, for

want of aliment. As it increased, and the sullen roaring announced its power, it cleared every thing before it, leaving the black and smoking soil far more naked than if the scythe had swept the place. The situation of the fugitives would have still been hazardous had not the area enlarged as the flame encircled them. But by advancing to the spot where the trapper had kindled the grass, they avoided the heat, and in a very few moments the flames began to recede in every quarter, leaving them enveloped in a cloud of smoke, but perfectly safe from the torrent of fire that was still furiously rolling onward.

The spectators regarded the simple expedient of the trapper with that species of wonder, with which the courtiers of Ferdinand are said to have viewed the manner in which Columbus made his egg to stand on its end, though with feelings that were filled with gratitude instead of envy.

"Most wonderful!" said Middleton, when he saw the complete success of the means by which they had been rescued from a danger that he had conceived to be unavoidable. The thought was a gift from heaven, and the hand that executed it should be immortal."

"Old trapper," cried Paul, thrusting his fingers through his shaggy locks, "I have lined many a loaded bee into his hole, and know something of the nature of the woods, but this is robbing a hornet of his sting without touching the insect!"

"It will do—it will do," returned the old man, who after the first moment of his success seemed to think no more of the exploit; "now get the horses in readiness. Let the flames do their work for a short half hour, and then we will mount. That time is needed to cool the meadow, for these unshod Teton beasts are as tender on the hoof as a bare-footed girl."

Middleton and Paul, who considered this unlooked-for escape as a species of resurrection, patiently awaited the time the trapper mentioned with renewed confidence in the infallibility of his judgment. The Doctor regained his tablets, a little the worse from having fallen among the grass which had been subject to the action of the flames, and was consoling himself for this slight misfortune, by recording uninterruptedly such different vacillations in light and shadow as he chose to consider as phenomena.

In the mean time the veteran, on whose experience they all so implicitly relied for protection, employed himself in reconnoitring objects in the distance, through the openings which the air occasionally made in the immense bodies of smoke, that by this time lay in enormous piles on every part of the plain.

"Look you here, lads," the trapper said, after a long and anxious examina-

tion, "your eyes are young, and may prove better than my worthless sight—though the time has been, when a wise and brave people saw reason to think me quick on a look-out; but those times are gone, and many a true and tried friend has passed away with them. Ah's me! if I could choose a change in the orderings of Providence—which I cannot, and which it would be blasphemy to attempt, seeing that all things are governed by a wiser mind than belongs to mortal weakness—but if I were to choose a change, it would be to say, that such as they who have lived long together in friendship and kindness, and who have proved their fitness to go in company, by many acts of suffering and daring in each other's behalf, should be permitted to give up life at such times, as when the death of one leaves the other but little reason to wish to live."

"Is it an Indian, that you see?" demanded the impatient Middleton.

"Red-skin or White-skin, it is much the same. Friendship and use can tie men as strongly together in the woods as in the towns — ay, and for that matter, stronger. Here are the young warriors of the prairies—Often do they sort themselves in pairs, and set apart their lives for deeds of friendship; and well and truly do they act up to their promises. The death-blow to one is commonly mortal to the other! I have been a solitary man much of my time, if he can be called solitary, who has lived for seventy years in the very bosom of natur', and where he could at any instant open his heart to God, without having to strip it of the cares and wickednesses of the settlements—but making that allowance, have I been a solitary man; and yet have I always found that intercourse with my kind was pleasant, and painful to break off, provided that the companion was but brave and honest. Brave, because a skeary com-

rade in the woods," suffering his eyes inadvertently to rest a moment on the person of the abstracted naturalist, "is apt to make a short path long; and honest, inasmuch as craftiness is rather an instinct of the brutes, than a gift becoming the reason of a human man."

"But the object that you saw—was it a Sioux?"

"What the world of America is coming to, and where the machinations and inventions of its people are to have an end, the Lord, he only knows. I have seen in my day, the chief, who, in his time, had beheld the first Christian that placed his wicked foot in the regions of York! How much has the beauty of the wilderness been deformed in two short lives! My own eyes were first opened on the shores of the Eastern sea, and well do I remember, that I tried the virtues of the first rifle I ever bore, after such a march, from the door of my father to the forest, as a stripling could

make between sun and sun; and that without offence to the rights or prejudices of any man who set himself up to be the owner of the beasts of the fields. Natur' then lay in its glory along the whole coast, giving a narrow stripe, between the woods and the Ocean, to the greediness of the settlers. And where am I now? Had I the wings of an eagle, they would tire before a tenth of the distance which separates me from that sea could be passed; and towns, and villages, farms, and highways, churches, and schools, in short, all the inventions and deviltries of man, are spread across the region. I have known the time when a few Red-skins, shouting along the borders, could set the provinces in a fever; and men were to be armed; and troops were to be called to aid from a distant land; and prayers were said, and the women frighted, and few slept in quiet because the Iroquois were on the war

path, and the accursed Mingo had the tomahawk in his hand. How is it now? The country sends out her ships to foreign lands, to wage their battles; cannon are plentier than the rifle used to be, and trained soldiers are never wanting, in tens of thousands, when need calls for their services. Such is the difference atween a province and a state, my men; and I, miserable and worn out as I seem, have lived to see it all!"

"That you must have seen many a chopper skimming the cream from the face of the earth, and many a settler getting the very honey of nature, old trapper," said Paul, "no reasonable man can, or, for that matter, shall doubt. But here is Ellen getting uneasy about the Siouxes, and now you have given your mind so freely concerning these matters, if you will just put us on the line of our flight, the swarm will make another move."

"Anan!"

"I say that Ellen is getting uneasy, and as the smoke is lifting from the plain, it may be prudent to take another flight."

"The boy is reasonable. I had forgotten we were in the midst of a raging fire, and that Siouxes were round about us like hungry wolves watching a drove of buffalos. But when memory is at work in my old brain, on times long past, it is apt to overlook the matters of the day. You say right, my children, it is time to be moving, and now comes the real nicety of our case. It is easy to outwit a furnace, for it is nothing but a raging element; and it is not always difficult to throw a grizzly bear from his scent, for the creatur' is both enlightened and blinded by his instinct; but to shut the eyes of a waking Teton is a matter of greater judgment, inasmuch as his deviltry is backed by the cunning of reason."

Notwithstanding the old man appeared thus conscious of the difficulty of the undertaking, he set about its achievement with great steadiness and alacrity. After completing the examination, which had been interrupted by the melancholy wanderings of his mind, he gave the signal to his companions to mount. The horses, which had continued passive and trembling amid the raging of the fire, received their burthens with a satisfaction so very evident, as to furnish a favourable augury of their future industry. The trapper invited the Doctor to take his own steed, declaring his intention to proceed on foot.

"I am but little used to journeying with the feet of others," he added, as a reason for the measure, "and my legs are a-weary of doing nothing. Besides, should we light suddenly on an ambushment, which is a thing far from impossible, the horse will be in a better condition for a hard run with one man on

his back than with two. As for me, what matters it whether my time is to be a day shorter or longer. Let the Tetons take my scalp, if it be God's pleasure; they will find it covered with gray hairs, and it is beyond the craft of man to cheat me of the knowledge and experience by which they have been whitened."

As no one among the impatient listeners seemed disposed to dispute the arrangement, it was acceded to in silence. The Doctor, though he muttered a few mourning exclamations on behalf of the lost Asinus, was by far too well pleased in finding that his speed was likely to be sustained by four legs instead of two, to be long in complying, and, consequently, in a very few moments, the bee-hunter, who was never last to speak on such occasions, vociferously announced that they were ready to proceed.

"Now, look off yonder to the east,"

said the old man, as he began to lead the way across the murky and still smoking plain; "little fear of cold feet in journeying such a path as this—but look you off to the east, and if you see a sheet of shining white, glistening like a plate of beaten silver, through the openings of the smoke, why that is water. A noble stream is running thereaway, and I thought I got a glimpse of it a while since; but other thoughts came and I lost it. It is a broad and swift river, such as the Lord has made many of its fellows in this desert. For here may natur' be seen in all its richness, trees alone excepted. Trees, which are to the 'arth, as fruits to a garden; without them nothing can be pleasant or thoroughly useful. Now watch all of you, with open eyes, for that stripe of glittering water, for we shall not be safe until it is flowing between our trail and these sharp-sighted Tetons."

The latter declaration was enough to

insure a vigilant look-out for the desired stream on the part of all the trapper's followers. With this object in view, the party proceeded in profound silence, the old man having admonished them of the necessity of caution as they entered the clouds of smoke, which were rolling like masses of fog along the plain, more particularly over those spots where the fire had encountered occasional pools of stagnant water.

They had travelled near a league in this manner, without obtaining the desired glimpse of the river. The fire was still raging in the distance, and as the air swept away the first vapour o. the conflagration, fresh volumes rolled along the place, limiting the view. At length the old man, who had begun to betray some little uneasiness, which caused his followers to apprehend that even his acute faculties were beginning to be confused in the mazes of the smoke,

made a sudden pause, and dropping his rifle to the ground, he stood, apparently musing over some object at his feet. Middleton and the rest rode up to his side, and demanded the reason of the halt.

"Look ye, here," returned the trapper, pointing to the mutilated carcass of a horse, that lay more than half consumed in a little hollow of the ground: "here may you see the power of a prairie conflagration. The 'arth is moist hereaway, and the grass has been taller than usual. This miserable beast has been caught in his bed. You see the bones, the crackling and scorched hide, and the grinning teeth. A thousand winters could not wither an animal so thoroughly as the element has done it in a minute."

"And this might have been our fate," said Middleton, "had the flames come upon us in our sleep!"

"Nay, I do not say that; I do not say that. Not but that man will burn as

well as tinder; but that, being more reasoning than a horse, he would better know how to avoid the danger."

"Perhaps this then has been but the carcass of an animal, or he too would have fled."

"See you these marks in the damp soil? Here have been his hoofs—and there is a moccasin print, as I am a sinner! The owner of the beast has tried hard to move him from the place, but it is in the instinct of the creatur' to be faint-hearted and obstinate in a fire."

"It is a well-known fact. But if the animal has had a rider, where is he?"

"Ay, therein lies the mystery," returned the trapper, stooping to examine the signs in the ground with a closer eye. "Yes, yes, it is plain there has been a long struggle atween the two. The master has tried hard to save his beast, and the flames must have been very greedy, or he would have had better success."

"Harkee, old trapper," interrupted Paul, pointing to a little distance, where the ground was drier, and the herbage had, in consequence, been less luxuriant; "just call them two horses. Yonder lies another."

"The boy is right! Can it be, that the Tetons have been caught in their own snares! Such things do happen; and here is an example to all evil-doers. Ay, look you here, this is iron; there have been some white inventions about the trappings of the beast—it must be so—it must be so—a party of the knaves have been skirting in the grass after us, while their friends have fired the prairie, and look you at the consequences; they have lost their beasts, and happy have they been if their own souls are not now skirting along the path which leads to the Indian heaven."

"They had the same expedient at command as yourself," rejoined Middleton, as the party slowly proceeded, approach-

ing the other carcass, which lay directly on their route.

"I know not that. It is not every savage that carries his steel and flint, or as good a rifle pan as this old friend of mine. It is slow making a fire with two sticks, and little time was given to consider or invent just at this spot, as you may see by yon streak of flame, which is flashing along afore the wind, as if it were on a trail of powder. It is not many minutes since the fire has passed hereaway, and it may be well to look at our primings; not that I would willingly combat the Tetons, God forbid! but if a fight needs be, it is always wise to get the first shot."

"This has been a strange beast, old man," said Paul, who had pulled the bridle, or rather halter, of his steed over the second carcass, while the rest of the party were already passing in their eagerness to proceed; "a strange horse do I call it: it has neither head nor hoofs!"

"The fire has not been idle," returned the trapper, keeping his eye vigilantly employed in profiting by those glimpses of the horizon, which the whirling smoke offered to his examination. "It would soon bake you a buffalo whole, or for that matter powder his hoofs and horns into white ashes. Shame, shame, old Hector; as for the captain's pup it is to be expected that he would show his want of years, and I may say, I hope without offence, his want of education too; but for a hound like you, who has lived so long in the forest afore he came into these plains, it is very disgraceful, Hector, to be showing his teeth and growling at the carcass of a roasted horse, the same as if he was telling his master, that he had found the trail of a grizzly bear."

"I tell you, old trapper, this is no horse; neither in hoofs, head, nor hide."

"Anan! Not a horse? Your eyes

are good for the bees and for the hollow trees, my lad, but—bless me, the boy is right! That I should mistake the hide of a buffalo, scorched and crimpled as it is, for the carcass of a horse! Ah's me! The time has been, my men, when I would tell you the name of a beast as far as eye could reach, and that too with most of the particulars of colour, age, and sex."

"An inestimable advantage have you then enjoyed, venerable venator!" observed the attentive naturalist. "The man who can make these distinctions in a desert, is saved the pain of many a weary walk, and often of an inquiry that in its result proves useless. Pray tell me, did your exceeding excellence of vision extend so far, as to enable you to decide on their *order* or *genus?*"

"I know not what you mean by your orders of genius."

"No!" interrupted the bee-hunter, a little disdainfully for him, when speak-

ing to his aged friend; "now, old trapper, that is admitting your ignorance of the English language, in a way I should not expect from a man of your experience and understanding. By order, our comrade means, whether they go in promiscuous droves, like a swarm that is following its queen-bee, or in single file, as you often see the buffalos trailing each other through a prairie. And as for genius, I'm sure *that* is a word well understood, and in everybody's mouth. There is the congressman in our district, and that tonguey little fellow, who puts out the paper in our county, they are both so called, for their smartness; which is what the Doctor means, as I take it, seeing that he seldom speaks without some considerable meaning."

When Paul finished this very clever explanation, he looked behind him with an expression, which, rightly interpreted, would have said—"You see, though I

don't often trouble myself in these matters, I am no fool."

Ellen admired Paul for any thing but his learning. There was enough in his frank, fearless, and manly character, backed as it was by great personal attraction, to awaken her sympathies, without the necessity of prying into his mental attainments. The poor girl reddened like a rose, her pretty fingers played with the belt, by which she sustained herself on the horse, and she hurriedly observed, as if anxious to direct the attentions of the other listeners, from a weakness on which her own thoughts could not bear to dwell—

"And then this is not a horse, after all?"

"It is nothing more nor less than the hide of a buffalo," continued the trapper, who had been no less puzzled by the explanation of Paul, than by the language of the Doctor; "the hair is

beneath; the fire has run over it, as you see, for being fresh, the flames could take no hold. The beast has not been long killed, and it may be that some of the beef is still hereaway."

"Lift the corner of the skin, old trapper," said Paul, with the tone of one, who felt as if he had now proved his right to mingle his voice in any council; "if there is a morsel of the hump left, it must be well cooked, and it shall be welcome."

The old man laughed heartily at the conceit of his companion. Thrusting his foot beneath the skin, it moved. Then it was suddenly cast aside, and an Indian warrior sprang from its cover, to his feet, with an agility that bespoke how urgent he deemed the occasion.

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